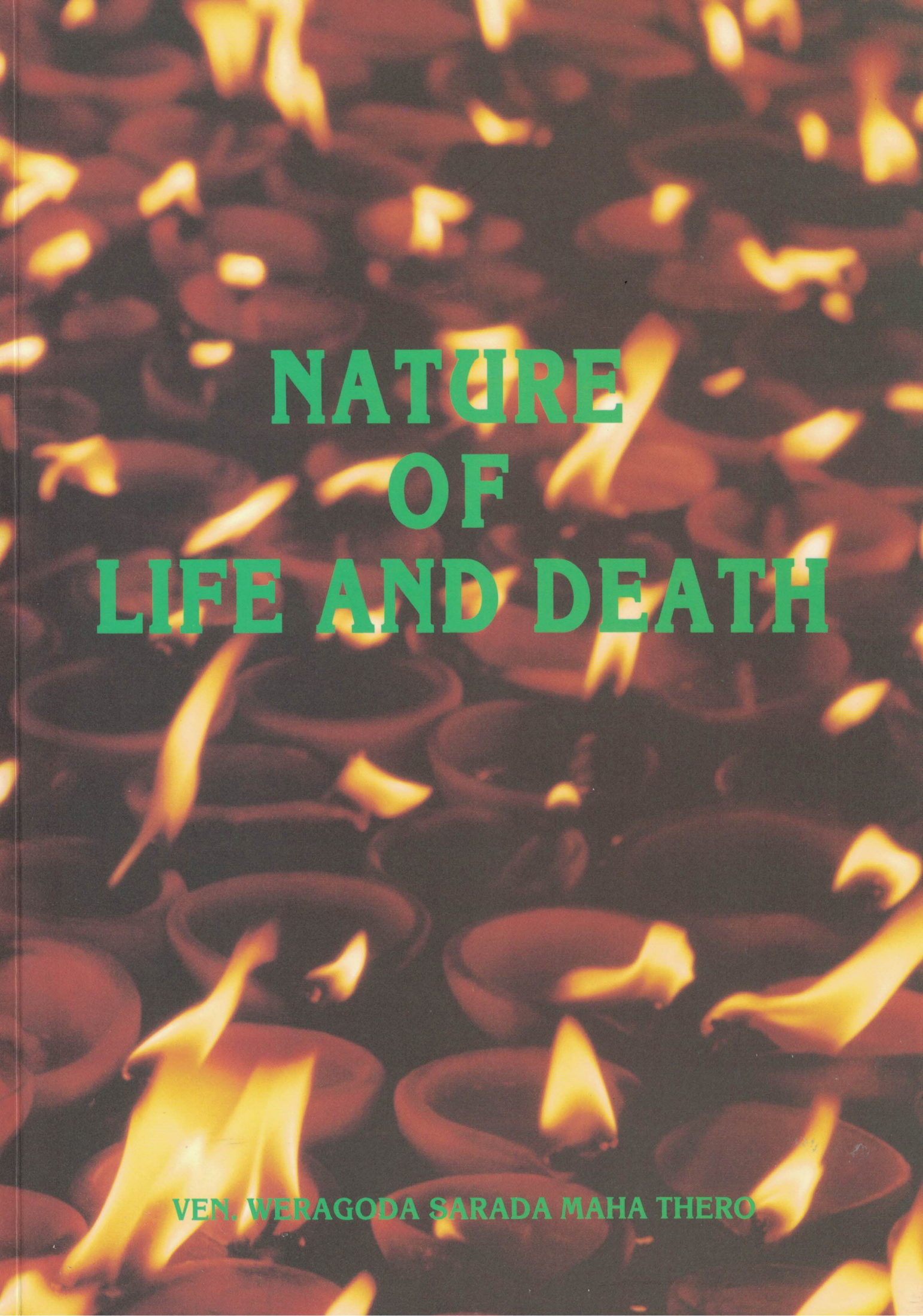
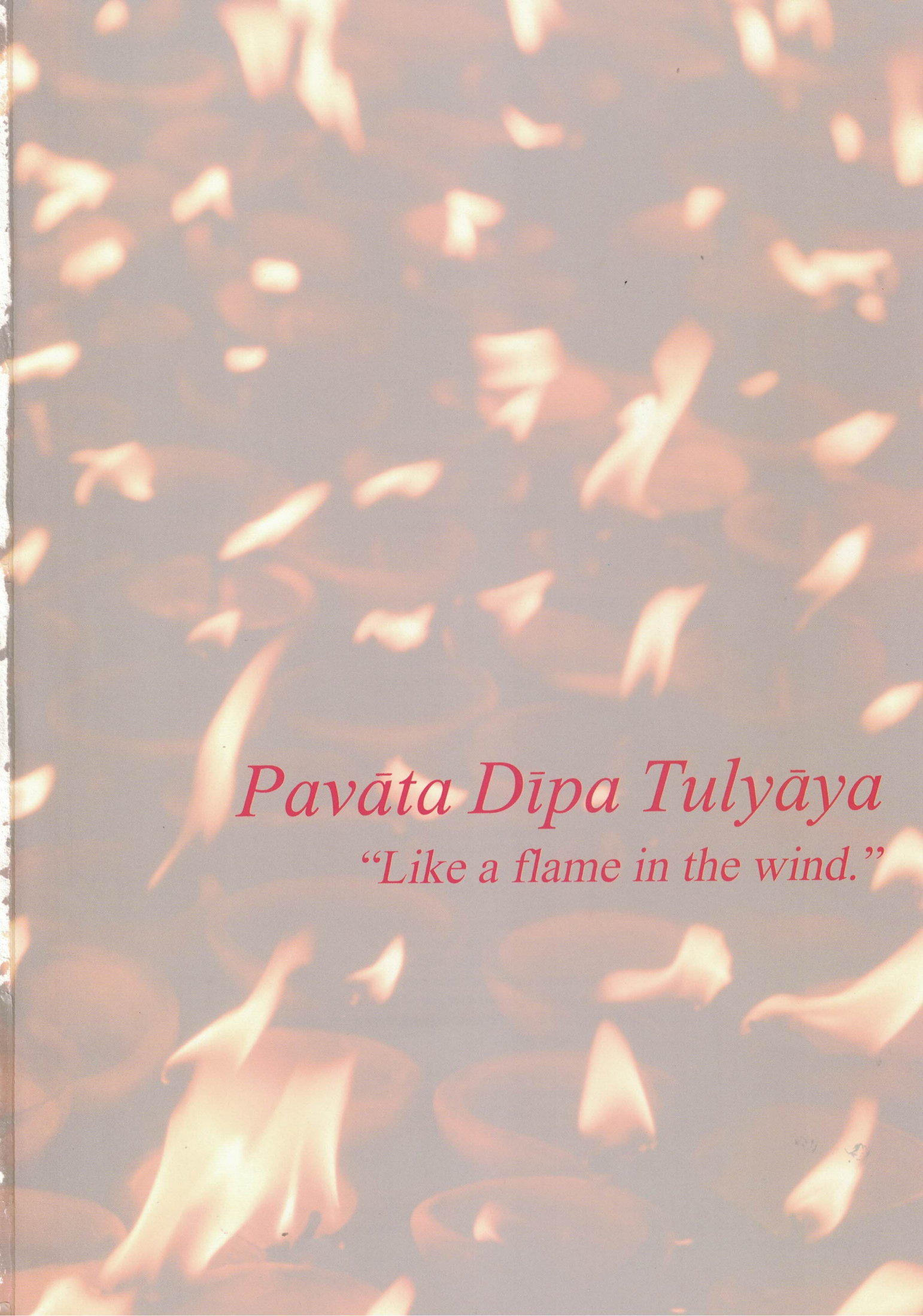


NATURE OF LIFE AND DEATH

VEN. WERAGODA SARADA MAHA THERO


Pavāta Dīpa Tulyāya
"Like a flame in the wind."

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COVER
"Contemplate that life is but a flame in the wind."The series of flames shown on the cover, reflects this uncertainty of Death, as those flames are likely to be blown out anytime by a gust of wind.
Photograph by Bertie Gunasekara

NATURE OF LIFE AND DEATH

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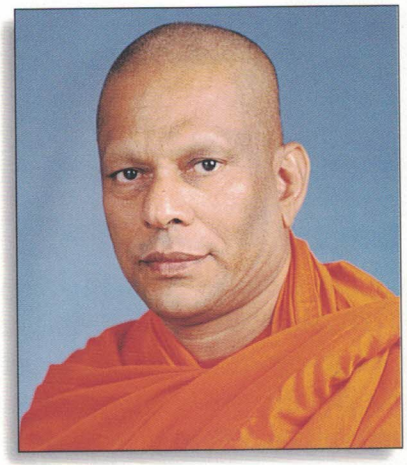
INTRODUCTION



VEN. WERAGODA SARADA MAHA THERO

There are two major inescapable issues that dominate the totality of the sentient world. These two are, of course, life and death. Once life has occurred either in human form, or in myriads of other versions, it is fully under the sway of Death. Universally, Death is relentless - unpredictable & irrevocable. No one can stand in its way. Death does not brook any obstacle. It has no regard for quality. It is no respecter of age, sex or rank.

Death lurks everywhere. Life may come upon Death in the most likely of places - in a battle field, or in combat, or in the most unlikely of places - in a charming garden, at the top of a mountain peak, or in one's comfortable bed at home. It may lie in wait in a pleasure park, in a playground, or at the corner of a street. One is likely to meet it right at the centre of a busy highway amidst the rush of traffic.

Death may claim a newly born infant as its victim even before that tiny manifestation of life has had a moment to feel what being alive is like. Death could prey upon a person in his or her ripe old age, after he or she has drunk deep at the fountain of life.

In the modern age of advanced technology when man leaves his house on earth to roam at will through the air in his sophisticated flying machines, Death, the ever-alert, may strike, up in the sky. The sky-vehicles transporting hundreds of men, women and children, may disintegrate in a trice into fiery smithereens. Many lives of variegated characteristics, shapes and sizes shatter into bits and pieces in the trap set by Death in mid-air. Life is crushed suddenly, totally, unexpectedly, immediately and terrifyingly, in the midst of a breath as it were in a split second. Such victims marked by Death, to be rubbed off at its horrendous and diabolical whim, do not get a wee bit of respite - even to be stunned, surprised or bewildered, as Death would have its nasty and hideous business done, in just one disastrous blink. When Death claims a multiplicity of victims in such a fell swoop, the survivors are smitten by horror and remorse. Images, impressions and intimate

memories flash through the minds of the living. Death of others is a torture to those who have to witness it, and to live with it, until their own death.

Death, in some exceptionally moving instances, can spill over beyond a personal and private form of loss and emotion, to get converted into a communal or national trauma. The crash of Silkair Flight MI 185, which harrowingly underlined the uncertainty of death, has left an indelibly traumatic scar upon a whole nation. In the presence of the paralysing illogicality of sudden mass death, a whole nation held its suffocating breath for one stunned moment before it could get back into reality and awaken to the true proportions of the tragic loss they had suffered.

The details of the multiple tragedy continue to seep in, deepening the sense of pain and sorrow, emphasizing the helplessness of man in the face of un-stoppable death, in spite of modern man's proud record of scientific and technological advancement.

The crash victims of MI 185 came from a multiplicity of backgrounds. There were professionals representing a variety of disciplines - accountants, engineers, chief executives of organizations and scholars. Some were pleasure-seekers and holiday-makers. Some of them travelled in family groups - the adults taking along their children fondly. They had their dreams and ideals, plans and agendas, appointments and visits, sentimental meetings, and endless things to do. But, they all went along with their pre-occupations without, even for a moment, calculating the role Death was destined to play in their lives so early and so unexpectedly, and while they were still in the air. Death reduced that group of humanity in their aerial vehicle into nameless, unidentifiable remains.

In the aftermath of this tragedy some questions kept on recurring. Why did they have to die like that? And, why this particular group? Death always raises questions. Although there is hardly a moment in human society when a human being does not fall prey to Death, man is not given to contemplate the transiency of life-to consider deeply how ephemeral life is. The tragic death of a person of exceptionally high profile, prods human beings to consider, at least, momentarily, the nature of life and death.

The accident that claimed the life of Princess Diana is a tragedy of that order. Princess Diana's tragic end traumatized the whole world, as in this instance Death had claimed, suddenly and tragically, a human being who emphasized all the assets of life so vividly - youth, vivacity, wealth, fame, glory, exceptional beauty, sense of charity, royal sons, and universal adoration. Above all, Princess Diana's tragedy emphasized the meaninglessness of life, driving people to ask - 'What does living signify, if it all ends up this way?' High tragedy, accidents that cause multiple deaths,

tend to stir people, at least for a little while, into thinking about life and death. But, routinely death happens every moment at a private and personal level without arousing the kind of wide-spread sentiment caused by an air crash, or by the tragic end of a personality of the calibre of Princess Diana. But, the supreme Buddha, over twenty-five centuries ago, saw with His Enlightened vision, the need to be aware of Death, and to be conscious of its perpetual presence. With His supremely Enlightened wisdom, He made it quite clear that man would not be able to make the best possible use of life unless he fully realized the way of Death. With this end in view, the supreme Buddha analysed the nature of Death in many of His Sermons and Discourses.

In consequence, the Buddha - the supremely Enlightened One - has become the greatest of religious leaders to make humanity systematically aware of the presence of Death's shadow to mar human life. The Buddha's Sermons and Discourses on the nature of life and death are not at all pessimistic. They are objective and analytical findings of the real nature of human life, imparting to them a highly philosophic touch. As a result of these directions, men and women will be able to place their lives on a firm foundation of reality.

The Buddha is the only religious teacher of humankind who has been able to obtain a steady vision of life and death. His vision is a way to organize human life towards the realization of a high sense of spiritual awareness. The language in which He has couched His vision of life and death is timeless. Some of His similes and metaphors have a strangely surprising modern ring to them. To stress the ephemeral and uncertain quality of human life, the Buddha makes this statement:

Pavāta dīpatulyāya
Sāyusantati yākkhayaṃ
Parūpamāya sampassaṃ
Bhāvaye maranassatim

The ephemeral, transient, uncertain, and vulnerable quality of human life should be thought of as the flame of a lamp in the wind.

Elton John (now Sir Elton) seems strangely to have been inspired by this image of the flame for his world-famous song on Princess Diana, 'Candle in the Wind'.

In the present age, humankind has reached a stage when tragic loss of life is beginning to increase. There are several reasons for this. Modern forms of industry, transport and power distribution are ever on the increase in sophistication. In consequence, the slightest error is likely to result in

tragic loss of human life. Then again, today even natural disasters are likely to bring about increased numbers of deaths. This is due to the fact that human settlements burgeon on a rapid scale. If such teeming human settlements suffer natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions, chances are that much life will be lost. With increasing loss of life, especially under tragic circumstances, sorrow, wailing, weeping, lamentation and trauma, too, will invariably increase.

A substantial work of this quality and volume, cannot be successfully accomplished without equally substantial assistance. Of those who readily extended their assistance to me, special mention should be made of Mr. Edwin Ariyadasa, Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Piyaratne Hewabatage, Designer and graphic expert and Mr. P. Wickramanayaka, Artist-illustrator-all of Sri Lanka. The President, Management committee and members of SBMC deserve special praise for their unfailing help, whenever it is needed. I extend my grateful thanks to all those people and organizations who helped in this publication. They are too numerous to be mentioned by name. However,I can in no way overlook the high support provided by Ms. Fong Mooi Yeng.

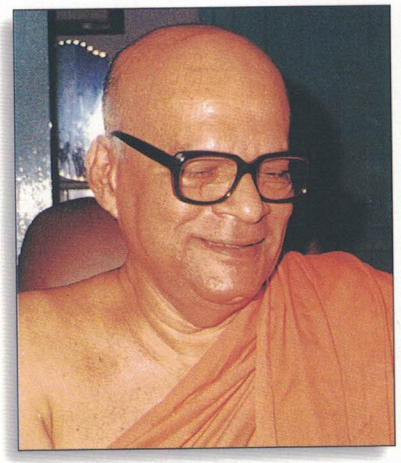
This book, " **Nature of Life and Death**" is published to put together some precious and universal statements made by the Buddha to enable man to reconcile himself to the real nature of life and death. Preventing the futile squandering of emotion, time and human effort in the worthless pursuit of sorrow, this work will enable men and women to look steadily at the real nature of life and death. Such a vision will enrich not only one's spiritual life, but one's work-a-day life as well, ensuring human efficiency on an extensive scale. The present work is especially dedicated to the memory of those who lost their life in the crash of Silkair Flight MI 185.

May the merit accruing from the publication of this work, embodying the Buddha's Word, ensure them Eternal Bliss.

With Metta,

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero
Chief Monk
Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre

FOREWORD



VEN. DR. KIRINDE SRI DHAMMANANDA MAHA NAYAKA THERO
Ph. D., D.Litt. Chief Prelate Malaysia Singapore

The supremely Enlightened One adopted in most of His Sermons and Discourses an unfailing method of ensuring attention. The Buddha would address His listeners mostly on issues that were of immediate relevance to their lives. He usually took a specific topical matter as the theme for His exhortations. Here, the advantage was that there was already heightened attention to that question, and the listeners would have already been talking about it. The Buddha utilized this keen attention of theirs and elevated the wisdom of His disciples and other listeners towards higher spiritual levels.

Being an outstanding Buddhist monk of our time, Ven. Weragoda Sarada has adhered to the Buddha's technique in his latest book, "**The Nature of Life and Death**". He has taken a topical issue that has received wide attention world-wide as the entry-point for his present work. The topical issue he has utilized is the crash of Silkair Flight MI 185, killing everybody aboard. This incident made most individuals ponder, as profoundly as they could, the significance of life and death.

In the present work, author Ven.Sarada has collected the Four Protective Chants and several associated texts to enable his readers to consider in depth the nature of the human condition. I would have been surprised if only Ven. Sarada had failed to illustrate this work lavishly with specially commissioned works of art, as he usually does. I am happy that the Ven. Sarada has not given me that kind of surprise. While congratulating Ven. Sarada for yet another radiant gem he has added to his treasury of publications, I can assure everyone that the present work will help the world to understand the reality of life and death, so enlighteningly expounded by the supreme Buddha.

With Metta,

Ven. Dr. Kirinde Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero

MESSAGE

SITO WOON CHEE
President, SBMC

The present publication of the SBMC, "**The Nature of Life and Death**" constitutes, at least to some extent, a new departure in our publications practice. Here, we have made an attempt to reconcile the ephemeral with the eternal. In the first instance we were persuaded to produce this book by the air disaster involving the crash of Silkair Flight MI 185. This traumatic event set most of us thinking seriously and deeply about the nature of life and death. Although many would not have publicly aired their private thoughts, views, and sentiments that were generated by this tragedy, everybody was moved by the sheer meaninglessness of this sad loss of life.

Our next step was to seek solace in the eternal wisdom of the supremely Enlightened Buddha. In His Sermons and Discourses, He has dwelt extensively upon the real nature of life and death. He has emphasized in many areas of His Doctrine that people cannot have any certainty over some important aspects of their being. He has specifically said that five points about human life, namely, how one's life will be led, what diseases a person is likely to suffer, the time of a person's death, and how a person's mortal remains will be disposed of, and where will one be reborn, cannot be known with certainty.

This book puts together some prominent ideas of the Buddha about these issues of life and death. This way we have attempted to derive eternal wisdom, to give meaning to issues of life we experience in our own day. As always, in all these matters, we are guided and directed by Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero, Chief Monk, SBMC. While holding his kind advice and unfailing assistance in the highest esteem, we dedicate ourselves to ever-improving performance in the future.
With Metta

Sito Woon Chee

IN MEMORIAM

The immediate cause for the publication of the present work entitled "The Nature of Life and Death", is the indelible trauma that gripped the nation at the tragic trajectory of Silkair Flight MI 185 of 19th December, 1997, that abruptly, shockingly, and instantly ended the lives of all the one-hundred-and-four individuals on board. In the aftermath of this benumbing and devastating episode of death and destruction, men and women were confronted in their vast sorrow by the unending human question- "What do life and death mean?" While offering to express our profound grief to all those who are bereaved, we publish this volume in memory of those departed. The sacred words enshrined in this work will provide solace, guidance and light to all those who will be helpless and bewildered in the presence of relentless Death. Bliss Eternal To All Beings.

Ven. Weragada Sarada Maha Thero

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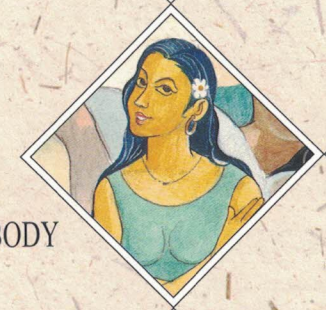

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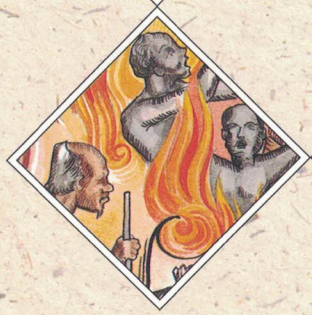

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KĀLĀMA SUTTA

Do not believe in anything (simply)
because you have heard it.
Do not believe in traditions because they
have been handed down for many generations.
Do not believe in anything because it is
spoken and rumoured by many.
Do not believe in anything (simply) because
it is found written in your religious books.
Do not believe in anything merely on the authority
of your teachers and elders.
But after observation and analysis,
when you find that anything agrees with reason
and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all
then accept it and live up to it.

BUDDHA

Anguttara Nikaya, Vol 1, 188-193 P.T.S.Ed

BUDDHĀNUSSATI

MEDITATION ON THE BUDDHA

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA

**Arahaṃ, Sammā Sambuddho, Vijjācaraṇa Sampanno, Sugato,
Loka Vidū, Anuttaro Purisa damma Sārathi,
Satthā Devamanussānaṃ, Buddho, Bhagavā**

*He is remote from defilement. He destroyed defilement, His enemies.
He destroyed the spokes of the wheels of rebirth, He is worthy.
He does not do wrong even secretly.*

He is fully Enlightened. He has discovered everything fully well.

*He is endowed with clear vision. And is endowed
with fifteen forms of virtuous conduct.*

*He is sublime because of his good manner of going.
He has gone to an excellent place. He has gone rightly.
He has enunciated rightly.*

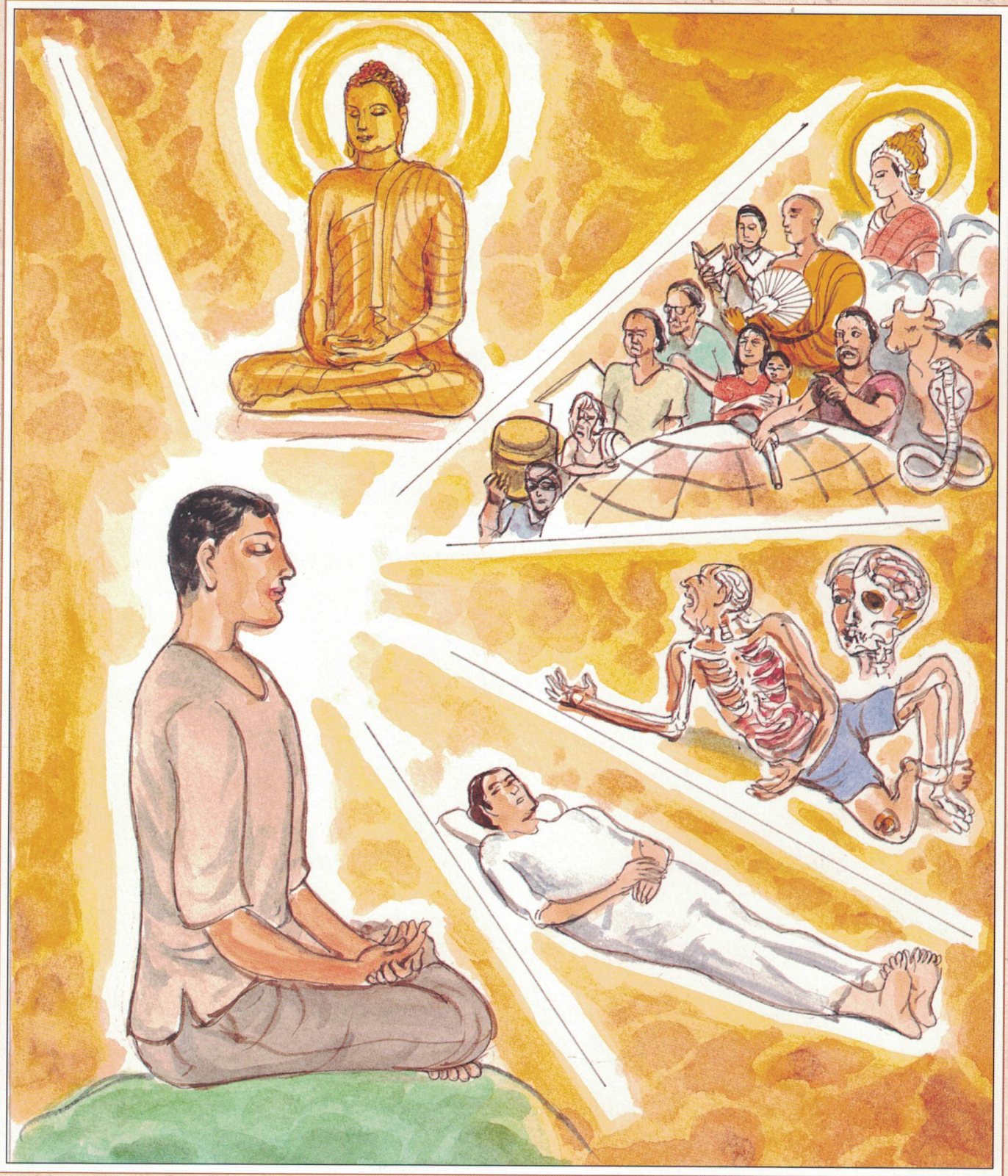
He has known the world in all its ways.

*He has no equal in his capacity to guide and discipline people,
so that they will not stray from the path of virtue.*

*He is capable of teaching people the moral and spiritual virtues.
He is described as the Teacher of both Gods and Men.*

*He has discovered
everything that can be discovered.*

*He is venerated as the
highest of all beings.*



Buddhānussati mettā ca - Asubhaṃ maraṇassati
Iti imā caturārakkhā - Bhikkhu bhāveyya sīlavā

A virtuous disciple should practise the following four-fold protective contemplation, namely reflection on the Buddha, reflection on compassion, reflection on the loathsome nature of everything and reflection on the nature of death.

BUDDHĀNUSSATI METTĀ CA

" To those who need positive guidance, Buddhism offers the 'four doctrines of protection'. These are merely four topics or subjects of contemplation and meditation; but their selection out of a mass of topics which one may meditate upon during his attempt to perfect spiritual training, speaks very highly of the practical sagacity of the Buddha."

Buddhānussati mettā ca
Asubhaṃ maranassati
Iti imā caturārakkhā
Bhikkhu bhāveyya sīlavā

Sīlavā bhikkhu - the Virtuous Monk
Buddhānussati - reflection on the Buddha
Mettā ca - reflection on Loving-kindness
Asubhaṃ- reflection on Impurities
Maranānussati- reflection on Death
iti - these
Imā Caturārakkhā - Four-fold Protective Meditations
bhāveyya - should practise

This stanza is, in effect an introduction to "Four Protective Meditations". It explains briefly the need to practise the "Four Protective Meditations". The person on whom this stanza is focussed is the **Bhikkhu**-the monk. The '**Bhikkhu**' in this instance is categorized as the virtuous monk.

The "Four Protective Meditations" require the concentration on four different themes, factors or subjects of meditation.

The First **Buddhānussati**, meditation upon the Buddha, enables the seeker after truth to develop his own faculties in emulation of the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One. The Second of the Four Protective Meditations is **Mettānussati** - The Meditation on Loving-kindness-Practising **Mettā** (loving-kindness) enables the Seeker after Truth to be in harmony with the whole world and all sentient beings. This form of meditation is widely practised.

The Third of the Four forms of Protective Meditation, is the concentration on the Impurities of Life. While making the meditator fully aware of the reality of life, **Asubhānussati** enables the practitioner of meditation to utilize this 'bundle of impurities' which is the human body, for the purpose of achieving higher spiritual goals.

The Last of the Four Protective Meditations is **Maranānussati** - the contemplation of Death. Coming to proper terms with the ever-present threat of death, gives beings a dynamism to work hard towards the permanent goal of human life, the achievement of spiritual liberty.

The stanza requires the **Bhikkhu** not merely to repeat words, phrases and stanzas, but also to practise. The stanza is quite specific about them. The word "**bhāveyya**" implies both 'meditation' and putting an idea into practice, without allowing it to remain only an idea. It should become not only part of life of the **Bhikkhu** (The Seeker of Truth) but it should become his total life.

The stanza characterizes the **Bhikkhu** (The Monk-The Seeker of Truth) as The Virtuous **Bhikkhu**, (**Sīlavā Bhikkhu**). The word **Sīla**, implies morality or virtue. **Sīla** originates in one's mind and mental phenomena (**cetanā**). These express themselves through physical action or through speech.

Ananta vitthāra guṇaṃ - Guṇato nussaraṃ muniṃ
Bhāveyya buddhimā bhikkhu - Buddhānussatimādito

An understanding disciple should contemplate
on the Buddha's infinite and pervasive virtues.

ANANTA VITTHĀRA GUṆAṂ

"The Buddha is an appropriate subject for a Buddhist to meditate upon. The life of the Buddha is the model and the standard for the Buddhist way of life. Buddhahood - the state of the most perfect being is the ideal which Buddhism has placed before humankind."

Ananta vitthāra guṇaṃ
Guṇato nussaraṃ muniṃ
Bhāveyya buddhimā bhikkhu
Buddhānussatimādito

Buddhimā Bhikkhu - the intelligent and wise monk
ananta vitthāra guṇaṃ - possessing endless, expansive and limitless qualities
Muniṃ - of the Sage - the Buddha
guṇato - reflecting upon the qualities
anussaraṃ - concentrating on the Buddha
ādito - done initially (as the first of Four Protective Meditations)
Buddhānussati - in the meditation upon the Buddha
bhāveyya - should meditate upon the Buddha

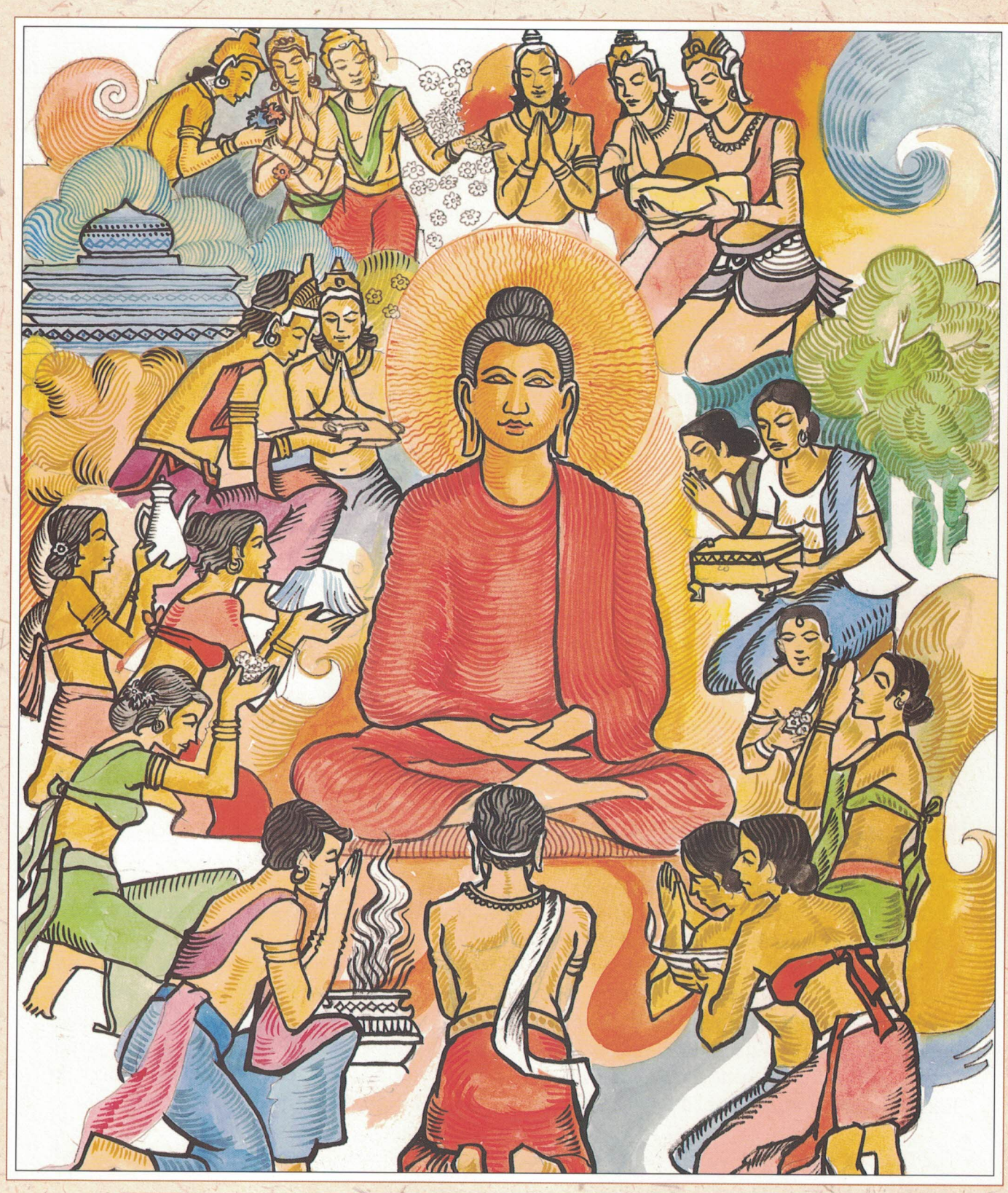
This stanza explains that the wise and intelligent monk, (the Meditator) who begins his Four Protective Meditations, should concentrate initially on the Supreme Buddha. He is described in this stanza as a sage endowed with infinite and extensive qualities. His virtues are boundlessly vast. The meditator is asked to concentrate firstly on the Qualities of the Buddha. Therefore, the meditator embarking upon the reflection of Four Protective Meditations will initially turn to **Buddhānussati** - Reflection upon the Virtues of the Sage.

The Buddha's qualities have been described as **ananta** - endless. This is because only another Buddha, will be able to know his qualities fully. The meditator, who concentrates on the endless, limitless and boundless virtues of the Buddha, begins his reflections at a place conducive to such reflections. He should go to a solitary retreat in a favourable location and start concentrating on the special qualities of the Supremely Enlightened One. In most instances where instructions are given to the meditator about suitable places for meditation, several specific sites are recommended. The foot of a tree is one of those places (**rukkhamūla**). Another place that is highly recommended is the forest (**araññā**). Empty houses too are suggested as suitable places for meditation. Of the endless virtues of the Buddha, certain special qualities could be concentrated upon.

These special qualities are described this way: "**The Buddha is the Blessed One, because he is accomplished: because he is Fully Enlightened: because he is endowed with Clear Vision: because his conduct is Virtuous: because his Vision is sublime: because he is the Knower of Worlds-the incomparable leader of men to be subdued, the Teacher of gods and men and because he is Enlightened and Blessed**".

The meditator can appreciate the "**ananta vitthāra guṇa**" (The endless qualities of the Buddha) and consider at least a fragment of one of his qualities. The Buddha's qualities can be extensively contemplated. As all the Supreme knowledge leading to liberation came from the Buddha, in the Four Protective Meditations, it is the Buddha who should be concentrated upon first.

That is the advice given in this stanza to wise **Bhikkhus**. "**Buddhimā Bhikkhu**" is the expression that describes the intelligent, discriminating meditator. Here The Buddha is described as **Muni** (Sage). The original meaning of the word signifies "The Silent Ascetic". The wise meditator will proceed to the concentration on the Buddha and his qualities, as the preliminary step in the practice of the Four Protective Meditations.



Savāsane kilese so - Ēko sabbe nighātiya
Ahū susuddha santāno - Pūjānañ ca sadāraho

The Buddha alone has destroyed all defilements, revealing an extremely pure mind, always deserving adoration.

SAVĀSANE KILESESO

"Herein, what he recollects firstly is that the Blessed One is accomplished (arahanta) for the following reasons: (i) because of remoteness (āraka), (ii) because of his enemies (ari) and (iii) the spokes (ara) having been destroyed (hata), (iv) because of his worthiness (araha) of requisites, etc., and (v) because of absence of secret (rahābhāva) evil - doing."

Savāsane kilese so
Ēko sabbe nighātiya
Ahū susuddha santāno
Pūjānañ ca sadāraho

so - the Buddha
ēko - alone
savāsane - with the potentiality for evil
sabbe kileso - all the defilements
nighātiya - having destroyed
susuddha santāno ahū - possessed an extremely pure mind
sadā - always
pūjānañca - to receive offerings
araho - became eminently suitable

The Supremely Enlightened One destroyed all the blemishes and defilements that had the potentiality for evil. He achieved this all alone without any external assistance. He attained the supreme knowledge of the Path to Liberation. With the power of this enlightened awareness He totally uprooted the defilements. In consequence, His mind became absolutely pure. Because of the unparalleled victory He has become the fit recipient for all the offerings made in devotion by all beings, including men and gods.

The attribute **arahaṃ** is given to the Buddha for several reasons. The Buddha is described as **arahaṃ**, firstly, because He distanced Himself from those enemies of Enlightenment, called "defilements". Then again, He is given the attribute **arahaṃ** because he destroyed the spokes of the wheels of existence. Thirdly, He is described as **arahaṃ** because He is eminently suitable to receive offerings and honour from His disciples. Once again, He deserves the epithet **arahaṃ** because He does not commit any unvirtuous or sinful act, even in secret. The fact that the Enlightened One deserves to be described as **arahaṃ** because He destroyed defilements, is proven by many events in the life of the Buddha.

Immediately after He attained Enlightenment, He was tempted by the three daughters of **Māra** (Death). But, they could not entice Him with all their displays of exquisite physical attractiveness as He had fully and totally destroyed all defilements. He is endowed with the attribute **arahaṃ** also because He has destroyed the spokes of the wheel of existence. He destroyed the sixteen impediments that obstruct the arising of the True Vision of human existence. He is called **arahaṃ** because He receives the offerings and the respect of disciples and others. The Buddha has stated that He is given offerings and honour by the people for five reasons. The five reasons are:

1) The Buddha is virtuous and possesses unparalleled spiritual achievements.
2) The Buddha explains issues only when He knows about the issues Himself.
3) The disciples expect to obtain directions and guidance only from the Buddha Himself, because they honour the Buddha for his exceptional wisdom.
4) The Buddha is honoured because He is prepared to answer any questions put to Him by others.
5) The disciples follow the instructions given by the Buddha. Therefore, those who receive instructions from Him always respect Him and honour Him.

The Buddha is given the attribute **arahaṃ** because he does not commit unvirtuous acts, even secretly.

Sabbakāla gate dhamme - Sabbe sammā sayaṃ muni
Sabbākārena bhujjhitvā - Ēko sabbaññutaṃ gato

The Buddha has rightly realised in all their aspects
matters relating to all times and has attained supreme Enlightenment
entirely through His own efforts.

SABBAKĀLA GATE DHAMME

"What must be directly known is directly known. What has to be developed has been developed. What has to be abandoned has been adandoned. And that, Brahman, is why I am Enlightened." He is fully enlightened (Sammā Sambuddha) because He has discovered (Buddha) all things rightly (sammā) and by Himself (sāmam).

Sabbakāla gate dhamme
Sabbe sammā sayaṃ muni
Sabbākārena bhujjhitvā
Ēko sabbaññutaṃ gato

Muni - the Buddha
sabbakāla gate - pertaining to all time
dhamme - phenomena
sabbe - all
sammā - well and absolutely
sayaṃ- by himself
sabbākārena - in every way
bujjhitvā - realized
ēko - by himself; without the help of others
sabbaññutaṃ - the state of the All-Knowing One
gato - achieved

The Sage - Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One - realized the nature of all phenomena, past, present and future. He realized all this fully and absolutely without the assistance of any other, and in every way. Thus, He was able to attain the status of the All-Knowing One.

The achievement of the status of omniscience is a rare attainment for any being. The status is unique because it is the highest fruition of the efforts made life after life for long ages. An aspirant to be a supremely enlightened one must possess eight qualities to be confirmed in the status of an aspirant Buddha.

The initial seed of the idea of aspiring to the status of the Supremely Enlightened One was planted in the mind of the Bodhisatta when he swam across the ocean, carrying his mother. When she was thus rescued from drowning, she wished that he should become Buddha. From that time on, he strove towards the attainment of the status of **Sammā Sambuddha** (Supremely Enlightened One),which has been defined in several ways. According to the Commentary to **Mūla Pariyāya Sutta**, **Sammā Sambuddha** is a unique individual who has been able to realize comprehensively and absolutely the nature of all phenomena by one's own self, without external assistance.

The Buddha confirmed His status of **Sammā Sambuddha** in His First Sermon, **Dhamma Cakkappavattana Sutta** (Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel). The Buddha's own interpretation is that He became **Sammā Sambuddha** at the moment He realized the nature of the world comprehensively.

The realization of the Four Noble Truths established the Buddha as the Supremely Enlightened One. The Buddha was endowed with attributes that only a **Sammā Sambuddha** (Supremely Enlightened One) could possess. Some of them are as follows: the ten-fold powers of the **Tathāgata**; the four-fold **visārada** wisdom; the six-fold unique qualities. In the Discourse entitled **"Ariyapariyesana Sutta"** the Buddha revealed that He was **Sammā Sambuddha** - the Supremely Enlightened One. He said:

> "I have risen above all. I have known everything that has to be known. I am not attached to any phenomenon. I have ended craving. I am liberated. Can I name any other person as my Teacher?"

Vipassanādi vijjāhi - Sīlādi caranehi ca
Susamiddhehi sampanno - Gaganābhehi nāyako

*That the leader (The Buddha) is endowed with the (Eight-fold) Knowledge such as **Vipassanā**, as extensive as the sky and the **Caranas** such as **Sīla**.*

VIPASSANĀDI VIJJĀHI

"He is endowed with (clear) vision and (virtuous) conduct: vijjācarana sampanno = vijjāhi caranena ca sampanno (resolution of compound). Herein, as to (clear) vision: there are three kinds of clear vision as stated in the Bhayabherava Sutta and additionally, eight kinds of clear vision as stated in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta."

Vipassanādi vijjāhi
Sīlādi caranehi ca
Susamiddhehi sampanno
Gaganābhehi nāyako

Nāyako - the Leader of the Three Worlds (the Buddha)
susamiddhehi - endowed with knowledge
gaganābhehī - as extensive as the sky
vipassanādi vijjāhi - adept in such forms of knowledge as Insight
sīlādi caranehi ca - well established in moral behaviour
sampanno - well possessed

The Buddha is the greatest Teacher of the world. He possesses eight forms of well-established knowledge, including Insight Knowledge and the fifteen forms of Knowledge and Conduct, including higher morality.

The knowledge acquired by the Buddha had a primary function. Its purpose was to dispel the darkness of ignorance. The supreme super-worldly Knowledge won by the Buddha is divided into three main categories called the Three Sciences **(tevijjā)**. These three are:

Pubbenivāsānussati - the science to discover the nature of past births
Dibbacakkuṃ - the divine eye
Āsavakkhaya ñāna - the science of eradicating the defilements

In some classifications, He possesses eight forms of Higher Knowledge. These eight are made up of **Abhiññā** (six Higher Spiritual Powers), **Vipassanā** (Insight) and **Iddhi** (Super-normal or Magical Power). To reach this higher spiritual Knowledge, **carana** (conduct) Knowledge is essential. The conduct, once again, is of fifteen forms.

Of the eight forms of Higher Knowledge,

The first is **Vipassanā ñāna** which provides Insight into the truth of impermanence, disharmony, and the impersonal nature of all phenomena.

The second is **Manomaya iddhi ñāna** (the magical power of the mind).

The third is **Iddhividha ñāna** (the Knowledge of magical powers).

The fourth is **Dibbasōta ñāna** (the power of the divine ear). This enables listening to the subtle sounds made by both men and deities.

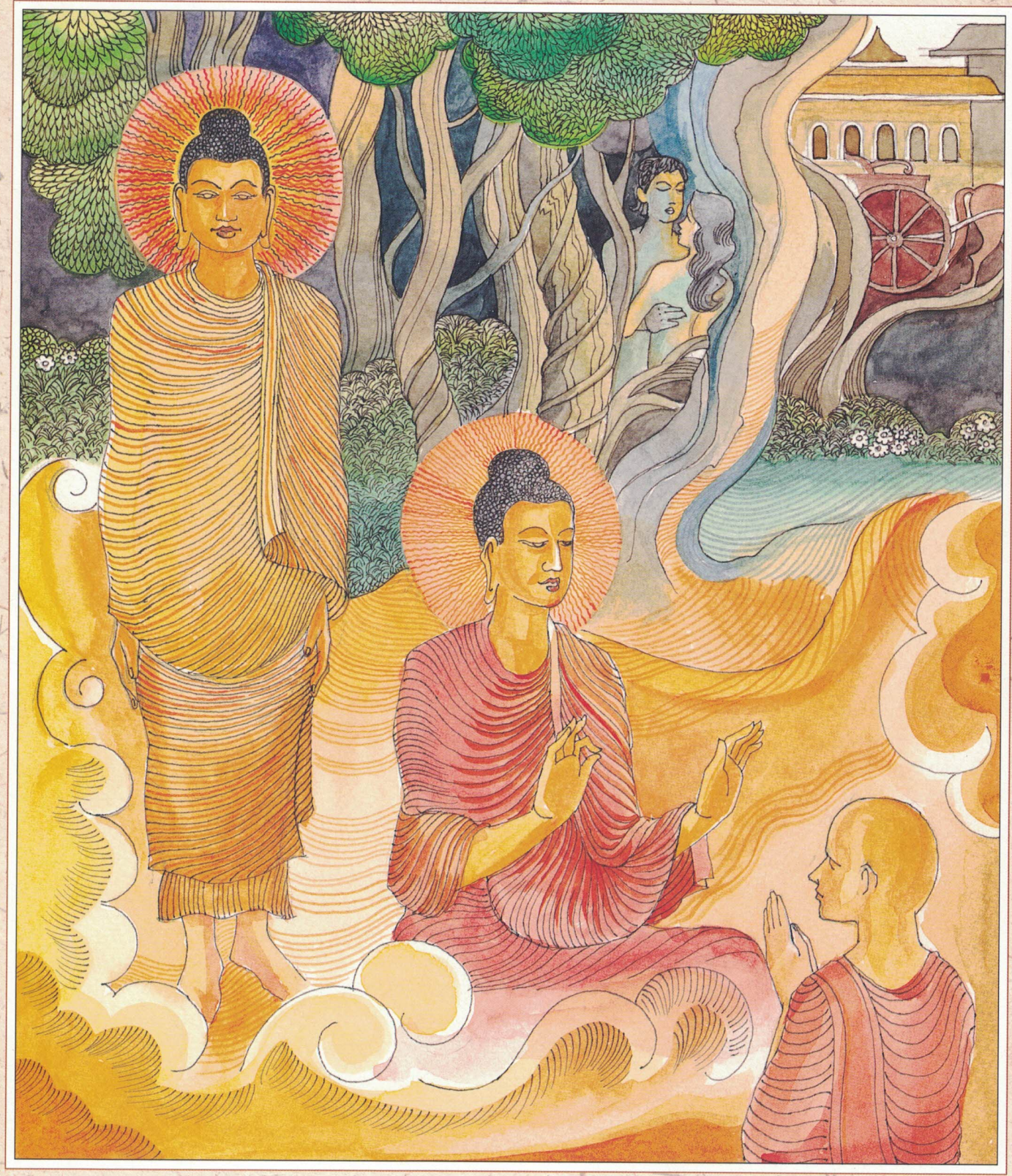
The fifth is **Paracittavijānana ñāna** (the higher Knowledge of knowing other minds).

The sixth Higher Knowledge is **Pubbenivā sānussati ñāna** (the capacity to reflect on past births).

The seventh is **Cutūpapāta ñāna** (the Higher Knowledge of the vanishing and the re-appearance of beings).

The eight and the last is **Āsavakkhaya ñana** (the Higher Knowledge of achieving release from defilements). **Āsavas** are defilements, cankers, blemishes, taints, corruptions etc.

The Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, eradicated the defilements in seven ways. He has the attribute **Sammā Sambuddha** (All-knowing One), not only because He realized this Knowledge all by himself, but also because He was able to communicate what He had realized to others as well.



Sammā gato subhaṃ ṭhānaṃ - Amogha vacano ca so
Tividhassāpi lokassa - Ñātā niravasesato

The Buddha has rightly gone to the blissful state.
*He is endowed with fruitful speech. He has known the three worlds, sensual (**Kāma**),*
*fine material (**Rūpa**) and formless (**Arūpa**) in their entirety.*

SAMMĀ GATO SUBHAṂ ṬHĀNAṂ

"He is called Sublime (Sugata) (i) because of a manner of going (sobhana-gamana), (ii) because of being gone to an excellent place (Sundaraṃ thānam gatattā), (iii) because of having gone rightly (sammāgatattā), and (iv) because of enunciating rightly (sammāgadattā)."

Sammā gato subhaṃ ṭhānaṃ
Amogha vacano ca so
Tividhassāpi lokassa
Ñātā niravasesato

so - (that) Buddha
subhaṃ - good
ṭhānaṃ - blissful state
sammā - well
gato - arrived at
amogha vacano ca - also does not utter empty words
tividhassa - the three-fold **(Kāma,Rūpa, Arūpa)**
lokassa api - worlds
niravasesato - totally, absolutely
ñātā - realized

He, the Buddha, has arrived at the most exalted state, in the most glorious manner. His Words are well-spoken, pleasant and not at all empty. Because of these attributes, He is described as **Sugato**. He has fully penetrated the nature of the world, which has three divisions either as mind, body, and immaterial group, or as living beings, formation and space.

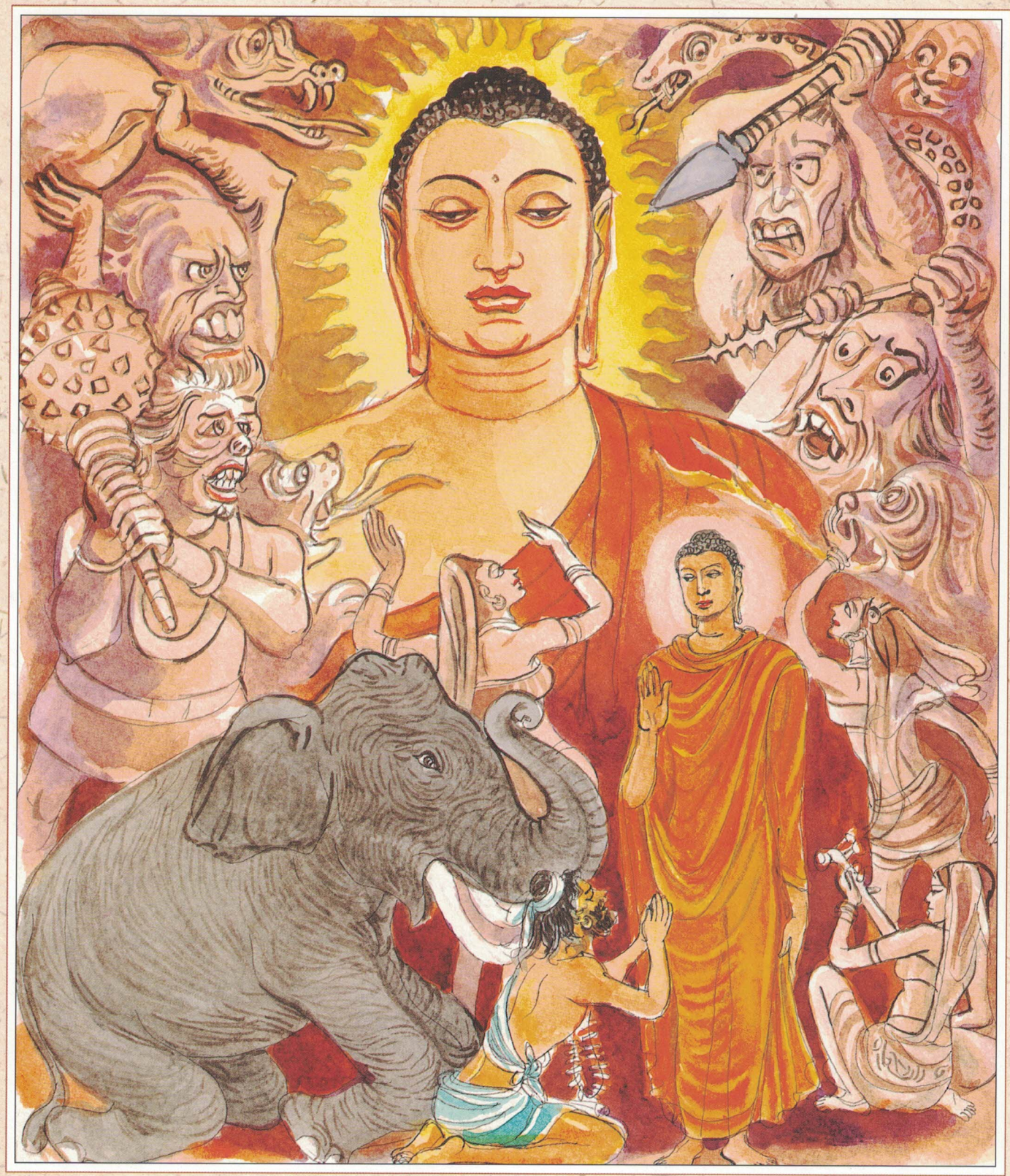
In the literal sense, the Buddha has an appealing and pleasant gait. Since his walk is attractive, He is described as **Sugato** . In the spiritual sense, He has gone along the **Noble Eight-fold Path**. His appealing and disciplined gait has been described in **Brahmāyu Sutta**. According to this Discourse, His steps are not too long or too short, but His paces are medium. His paces are not fast. Nor are they too slow. This Discourse provides an extensive description of the manner the Buddha walked. The most distinguishing event in His life is that He walked the moment He was born as Prince **Siddhārtha**.

His spiritual "walk" along the **Noble Eight-fold Pāth** is equally unique since a parallel system is not found in any other religion of the world. The spiritual path He advocated is not bent or crooked. His direction is fearlessness. The vehicle one has to use can accommodate innumerable masses. He moves on wheels of Dhamma (**Dhammacakka**). His style of walking is considered appealing because He reached **Nibbāṇa**-the Eternal Bliss - and guided others, too, to that exquisite region.

Thus it is to the excellent (**sundara**) place that he has gone (**gata**), that is, to the deathless **Nibbāṇa**. He is thus **sugato**, because of his having gone to an excellent place. He has also gone rightly (**sammā gata**), without going back to the defilements.

The Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, is described as **Sugato** also because His Words are pleasant. The Buddha never spoke about things that did not happen. He never spoke unpleasant words. He never uttered words that did not serve any purpose. He spoke only what was appropriate for any situation. On many an occasion, the Buddha explained to His disciples and others what should be spoken and how one should speak.

Given all these situations, He was endowed the epithet **Sugato**.



Sammā gato subhaṃ ṭhānaṃ - Amogha vacano ca so
Tividhassāpi lokassa - Ñātā niravasesato

The Buddha has rightly gone to the blissful state.
*He is endowed with fruitful speech. He has known the three worlds, sensual (**Kāma**),*
*fine material (**Rūpa**), and formless (**Arūpa**) in their entirety.*

TIVIDHASSĀPI LOKASSA

"He is the knower of world because He has known the world in all ways. For the Blessed One has experienced, known and penetrated the world in all ways as to its individual essence, its arising, its cessation and the means to its cessation according as it is said: 'Friend, that there is a world's end where one neither is born nor ages nor dies nor passes away nor reappears.'"

Sammā gato subhaṃ ṭhānaṃ
Amogha vacano ca so
Tividhassāpi lokassa
Ñātā niravasesato

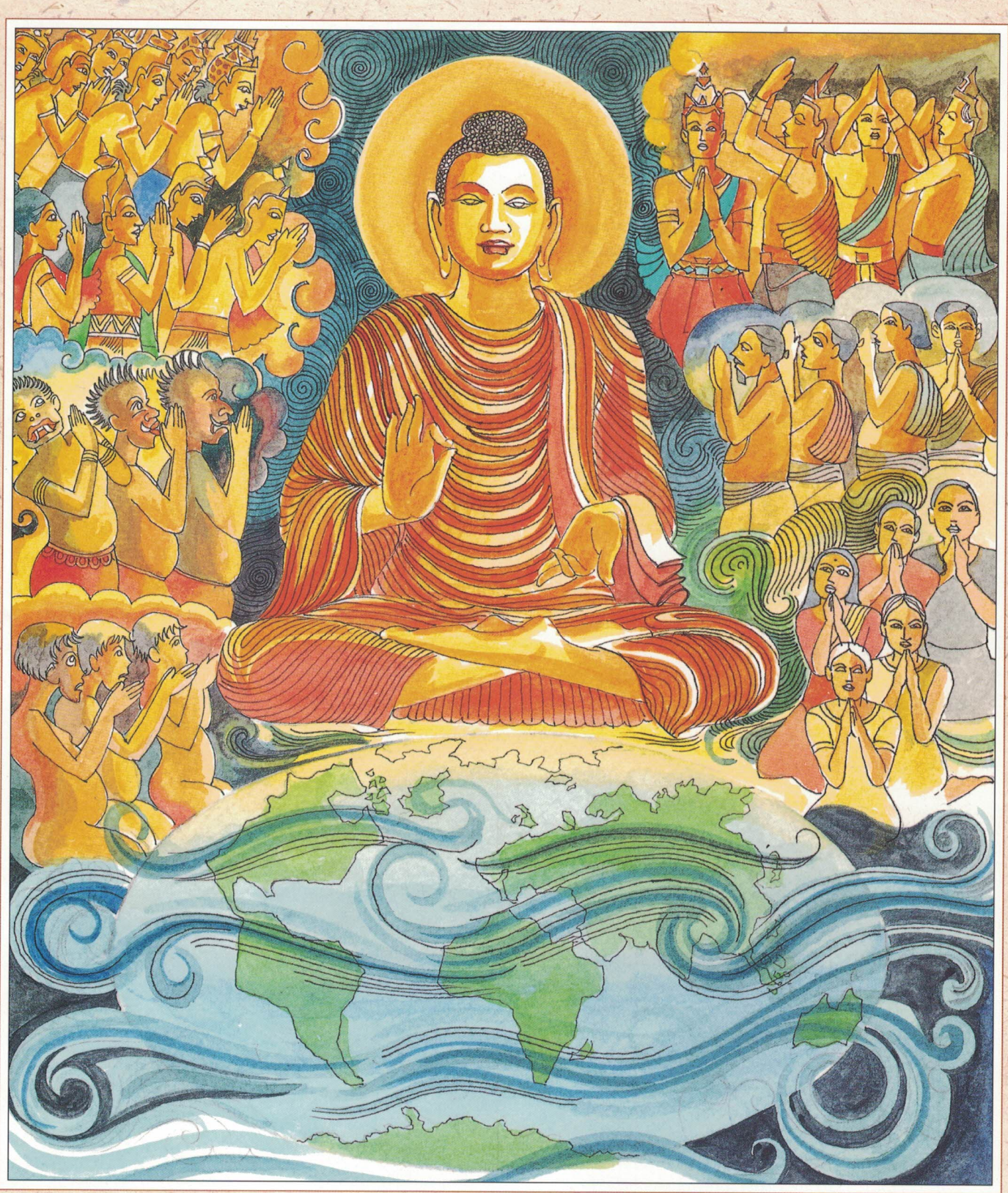
so - (that) Buddha
subhaṃ - good
ṭhānaṃ - blissful state
sammā - well
gato - arrived at
amogha vacanoca - does not utter empty words
tividhassā - the three-fold
lokassa api - worlds
niravasesato - totally, absolutely
ñātā - realized

One of the epithets for the Buddha is **Lokavidū** - the Knower of Worlds. The Buddha has been given this name because he is the only person who has known all the worlds fully. There are Three Worlds. They are the world of formations (**Saṃkāra**), the world of beings (**satta**), and the world of location (**avakāsa**). The Buddha knows all beings and their habits.

He knows their inherent tendencies, their temperaments, knows their bents and all their traits. The Buddha knows all beings. He knows those whose views are slightly clouded and he also knows those beings whose views are totally clouded. He is aware of beings with keen faculties and dull faculties, and with good behaviour and bad behaviour. He is also aware of those who are easy to teach and the best way to teach them. As the Buddha, He knows fully well, those who possess the potentiality to achieve spiritual habits and those who do not have the ability to progress in the field of spiritual achievement. When we describe the Buddha as **Lokavidū** (Knower of Worlds), what is also meant is the fact that he knew that the whole phenomenal world is suffering (**dukkha**).

The great quality of the Buddha is that he not only knew the world, but he taught the world the real nature of the Universe and beings. He taught the world that the whole Universe and all beings have three main characteristics: **Anicca** (Impermanence), **Dukkha** (Unsatisfactoriness), and **Anatta** (Soul-lessness). The Buddha is called the **Lokavidū** (The Knower of Worlds) not because he knew the worlds by walking through them. He has known all the worlds through his Supremely Enlightened Wisdom. The Buddha said that with his Supreme Wisdom, it was possible for him to discover the whole Universe and its characteristics within his own body. In this human body which is about a fathom in length there is the mind that is capable of sensations. **"I can indicate in this body itself the world, the origin of the world, the ending of the world and the path to the ending of the world of suffering."**

When the Buddha achieved the status of The Knower of Worlds, he became detached from both this world and rebirth in future worlds. The Buddha who fully understood the nature of the Universe and beings, advocated the Noble Eight-Fold Path as the means of reaching the end of the world. According to the Buddha, this is the only way to know the World. This way the Buddha not only knew the world but also taught others how they could know the world themselves.



Anekehi guṇoghehi - Sabbasattuttamo ahū
Anekehi upāyehi - Naradamme damesi ca

The Buddha has become Supreme among all beings by His manifold qualities.
He has by various means subdued those who should be subdued.

ANEKEHI GUṆOGHEHI

"In the absence of anyone more distinguished for special qualities than Himself there is no one to compare with Him, thus He is incomparable. For in this way He surpasses the whole world in the special quality of virtue. He guides (sāreti) men to be tamed (purisa-damme); thus He is leader of men to be tamed (purisadammasārathi); He tames, He disciplines."

Anekehi guṇoghehi
Sabbasattuttamo ahū
Anekehi upāyehi
Naradamme damesi ca

anekehi - various
guṇoghehi - possessing a vast flood of high virtues
sabba sattuttamo ahū - He has attained the status of being supreme to all beings
anekehi - in various
upāyehi -ways and means, strategies
naradamme -those who have to be subdued
damesi ca -He subdued

The Buddha - the Supremely Enlightened One - became the greatest being in the whole world because of the multiplicity of His great qualities. The Buddha subdued those who had to be subdued through a variety of means.

The Buddha is described as '**anuttara**', because there is no one more distinguished for special qualities than himself. As there is no one to compare with him he is incomparable. He surpasses the whole world in the special quality of virtue and also in the special qualities of concentration, understanding, knowledge and vision. He is without equal.

He disciplined men. He even tamed non-human beings. Among them are the **Nāga** King **Āravāla** and the elephant **Nalāgiri**. He disciplined a whole series of distinguished men as well. Of these, the most outstanding are **Saccaka**, the Brahman student **Ambaṭṭha**, **Pokkharasāti**, **Sonadaṇḍa** and **Kūtadanta**. He tamed ferocious demons as well. Some among them are **Ālavaka**, **Suciloma** and **Kharaloma**. The Buddha adopted three methods to discipline them. The Buddha himself has described these three: "I discipline men to be tamed sometimes gently, and I discipline them sometimes roughly, and I discipline them sometimes both gently and roughly."

The **Angulimāla** episode illustrates quite graphically the effectiveness with which the Buddha could tame even the most ferocious of men. **Angulimāla**, the untamed murderer of nine-hundred and ninety-nine people, became so disciplined under the guidance of the Buddha that he became a saint.

On one occasion, monks reported to the Enlightened One, that Ven. **Channa**, who was the Buddha's companion when He was Prince **Siddhārtha**, was arrogant and did not heed even the elder saints. The Buddha, then imposed '**Brahma Daṇḍa**' on Ven. **Channa** to discipline him. This method (**Brahma- Daṇḍa**) implies non-speaking. The whole community of monks refrained from talking to him. This eventually 'tamed' him and disciplined him.

On another occasion, the Buddha disciplined the whole community of Bhikkhus, by leaving them and going to the wilderness of '**Pārileyya**' by Himself. In turn, the lay community imposed a ban on the dissenting monks. They were then forced to seek the Buddha and accept His word. Because of His capacity to discipline not only men but also animals, He was an incomparable Tamer. The Supremely Enlightened Buddha, possessed the capacity to discipline people in such a way, that even ordinary laymen could achieve liberation, immediately by listening to a discourse by him. This way he was incomparable (**anuttaro**).

Eko sabbassa lokassa - Sabba sattānu sāsako
Bhāgya issariyādīnaṃ - Guṇānaṃ paramo nidhi

The Buddha is a great Teacher to the entire world.
He is a noble treasure of qualities such as fortune and prosperity.

EKO SABBASSA LOKASSA

"He teaches (anusāsati) by means of the here and now, of the life to come, and of the ultimate goal, according as befits the case, thus He is the Teacher (satthā). This meaning should be, Teacher (satthā) , the Blessed One is a caravan leader (satthā) since He brings home caravans (satthā)"

Eko sabbassa lokassa
Sabba sattānu sāsako
Bhāgya issariyādīnaṃ
Guṇānaṃ paramo nidhi

sabbassa lokassa - to the entire world
sabbesattā - to all beings
eko - alone, only; unparalleled
anusāsako - (became) advisor, preceptor
bhāgya - of good fortune
issariyādīnaṃ - supremacy and affluence
guṇānaṃ - qualities
paramo - superior
nidhi - a hidden treasure

The Buddha is an unparalleled preceptor to the whole world. For such noble gifts as affluence, prosperity and good fortune, He is a great treasure house.

The Buddha-the Supremely Enlightened One provides guide lines to all, in both worldly and spiritual matters. The Supremely Enlightened One is a trove of treasure for good fortune and affluence. This way, He is the greatest Teacher to all beings.

As an unparalleled Teacher, He instructs beings in three main human activities. They are the achievements of worldly well-being, the well-being in the next birth, and the realization of **Nibbāna**-the eternal Bliss. The methods adopted by the Buddha to train disciples in spiritual progress are extensively recorded in Buddhist Scriptures.

On one occasion a disciple was given a piece of pure white cloth. He was asked to keep on rubbing it, repeating the phrase "**rajo haraṇaṃ**" ("I am removing the dirt"). When he kept on doing it over a considerable period of time, the piece of cloth became exceedingly blemished. Concentrating his mind on this process of a pure piece of cloth being transformed into a piece of dirty rag, the disciple attained the status of an Arahant.

The training scheme adopted by the Buddha to guide His son Rahula in spiritual progress is extensively recorded in Buddhist literature. All this establishes beyond doubt that He was the greatest Teacher mankind has known.

What was unique about the Supremely Enlightened One was that He was fully and totally aware of His role as Universal Teacher. He has stated that He was the Teacher of all beings - men and deities.He was truly a Universal Teacher, because he guided not only gods and men, but at times, even animals. Once when the Buddha was teaching Dhamma, a frog heard his voice and concentrated upon it. While listening attentively to the Buddha, the frog forgot everything else. A man came over, and stood there leaning on his walking-stick. Unknowingly the man put his stick on the frog and the weight of the man leaning on the stick crushed the frog to death. But, since, the frog met with this fate while listening to the Buddha, the frog was reborn as a deity.

This illustrates that he was a Universal Teacher.

Paññāssa sabba dhammesu - Karunā sabba jantusu
Attatthānaṃ paratthānaṃ - Sādhikā guṇa jeṭṭhikā

The Buddha's wisdom is all pervasive and His compassion extends to all beings.
He is a benefactor unto Himself and others. He is Supreme in all qualities.

PAÑÑĀSSA SABBA DHAMMESU

"He is enlightened (Buddha) with the knowledge that belongs to the fruit of liberation, since everything that can be known has been discovered (Buddha) by him". Blessed (Bhagavant) is a term signifying the respect and veneration accorded to him as the highest of all beings and distinguished by His special qualities.

Paññāssa sabba dhammesu
Karunā sabba jantusu
Attatthānaṃ paratthānaṃ
Sādhikā guṇa jeṭṭhikā

assa - of that Supremely Enlightened One
sabba dhammesu - with regard to all Knowledge
paññā - wisdom
sabbajantusu - over all beings
karunā - compassion
sādhikā - the person who fulfills
attatthānaṃ - the best for himself
paratthānaṃ - the best for others
guṇa jeṭṭhikā - supreme in all qualities

The supreme wisdom of the Buddha extended to all knowable phenomena. There is nothing in all three worlds that the Buddha-Wisdom cannot see or understand. The Buddha's compassion extends to all beings. He had a mature sense of wisdom and was commiitted to the service of people. He is capable of achieving the highest possible for Himself. Through this achievement He was capable of doing the best for all beings.

The Buddha revealed on several occasions that He was the Buddha-the Supremely Enlightened One. Once, a Brahmin named **Droṇa** came to see the Buddha. The dialogue that ensued between the Buddha and Brahmin **Droṇa** is extremely meaningful. The Brahmin wanted to know who the Buddha was. He was keen to know whether the Buddha was a deity. The Buddha said, "No." The Brahmin kept on questioning Him. He was keen to know whether the Buddha was a **gandhabba**, a **yakkha** or a human being. The Buddha replied in the negative. The Brahmin was exasperated about the Buddha's identity. He asked the Buddha to explain who He was. The Buddha said: "A deity, a **yakkha**, a **gandhabba** or even a human being will have some blemishes left in him. But all my defilements have been eradicated. In consequence, I will not be born again. O, Brahmin, a lotus is born in the water. It grows in the water. It springs out of the water. But it remains uncontaminated by the water. In the same way, I was born in the world. I grew up in the world. But I remain uncontaminated by the world. Therefore, Brahmin, know that I am Buddha."

It is evident that the Buddha is neither a god nor a saviour, but the most supreme human being who has appeared in humankind so far. He became the Buddha entirely because He was a human being. Becoming a Buddha is possible only for a human being. No God could achieve that state.

By becoming Buddha, He gave the highest possible place a human being could give, to humans and to humanity. The Buddha is the only human being-the only religious Teacher-who demonstrated that the wise and virtuous human being is nobler, more powerful, and greater than even God. A deity who came to see the Buddha worshipped Him and stood on one side. **Brahmas**, coming to see the Buddha, knelt down on their right knee and asked Him questions with their two hands folded on their head in adoration. The Buddha Himself made it quite clear in very profound terms that He was the Supremely Enlightened One.

Dayāya pāramī citvā - Paññāyāttāna muddharī
Uddharī sabba dhamme ca - Dayā yaññe ca uddharī

The Buddha elevated Himself by the wisdom gained through the perfections. By preaching the Doctrine in all its aspects, He elevated others through His compassion.

DAYĀYA PĀRAMĪ CITVĀ

"The hearts of compassionate persons are even softer than flowers. They do not and cannot rest satisfied until they relieve the sufferings in others. At times, they even go to the extent of sacrificing their lives so as to alleviate the sufferings of others."

Dayāya pāramī citvā
Paññāyāttāna muddharī
Uddharī sabba dhamme ca
Dayā yaññe ca uddharī

dayāya - limitless compassion
pāramī - the ten perfections
citvā - perfected
paññāya - with His supreme wisdom
atthānaṃ - one's own self
uddharī - rescued (from the ocean of **Saṁsāra**)
sabba dhamme ca - the true nature of all phenomena
uddharī - emphasized
dayāya - out of great compassion
aññeca - other beings too
uddharī - rescued

The Buddha's compassion radiated to the whole of the living beings. He fulfilled the ten perfections because of his boundless pity and compassion towards beings who were enmeshed in **Saṃsāra** - the cycle of existence. Fulfilling the ten perfections over unimaginably long aeons, he suffered untold privations.

The Ten Perfections he was able to fulfill were:

i. **Dāna Pāramī** (Perfection in Giving and Liberality)
ii. **Sila Pāramī** (Perfection in Morality)
iii. **Nekkhamma Pāramī** (Perfection of Renunciation)
iv. **Paññā Pāramī** (Perfection of Wisdom)
v. **Viriya Pāramī** (Perfection of Energy)
vi. **Khantī Pāramī** (Perfection of Patience or Forbearance)
vii. **Sacca Pāramī** (Perfection of Truthfulness)
viii. **Addhiṭṭhāna Pāramī** (Perfection of Resolution)
ix. **Mettā Pāramī** (Perfection of Loving Kindness)
x. **Upekkhā Pāramī** (Perfection of Equanimity)

He endured these endless privations with the sole intention of lifting himself up from the ocean of **Saṃsāra**, so that he could lift up all the beings from the cycle of recurring births. Once he took himself out of the whirlpool of Becoming, his preoccupation was to raise all others out of this morass of suffering.

All these efforts were the result of the vast compassion he had for all beings. The Buddha's qualities of love (**dayā**) towards all beings was the energy that provided him with the capacity to make such a selfless effort to save all living beings.

When he received his first confirmation from the Enlightened One **Dīpankara**, that he would certainly become Buddha, his preoccupation was to cross **saṃsāra** in order to take other suffering beings across. That was his resolution. He went on and on making his effort because of his unbounded love for beings.

Therefore, the quality that is explained in this stanza is his great affection for the beings who suffer. This affection, **dayā** makes the Buddha the greatest human being to appear on earth, so far. In the meditation on the Buddha-qualities, his outstanding traits of **dayā** (affection) should always be kept as one of the themes of contemplation on the Buddha.

Dissamānopi tāvassa - Rūpakāyo acintiyo
Asādhārana ñānaḍḍhe - Dhammakāye kathāvakā ti

*It is impossible to visualise the Buddha even in His **Rūpakāya** (physical form).*
*How much more inconceivable is His **Dharmakāya** (doctrinal body) of unique wisdom?*

DISSAMĀNO PI TĀVASSA

"Through many a birth I wandered in saṃsāra, seeking, but not finding, the builder of the house. Sorrowful is it to be born again and again. O house-builder! Thou art seen. Thou shalt build no house again. All thy rafters are broken. Thy ridge-pole is shattered. My mind has attained the unconditioned. Achieved is the end of craving."

Dissamānopi tāvassa
Rūpakāyo acintiyo
Asādhārana ñānaḍḍhe
Dhammakāye kathāvakā ti

assa tāva - He, the Buddha
dissamāno - whose visible glory
rūpakāyo api - even His physical appearance
acintiyo - cannot be fully appreciated
asādhārana - unique
ñānaḍḍhe - full of supreme wisdom
dhammakāye - body of knowledge
ka eva katha - who can say anything?

Even the physical presence of the Buddha cannot be fully appreciated, though one could see him clearly. His visible glory is tremendously overpowering. If it is so difficult to appreciate fully and adequately what can be so clearly seen, who can say anything about his vast body of knowledge that no ordinary mind can adequately comprehend.

The physical glory of the supreme Buddha has been extensively recorded in the scripture. When as Prince **Siddhārtha** he travelled along in his carriage, a young maiden sang in praise of his physical comeliness. When he visited Rajagaha as Ascetic **Siddhārtha**, all the people were struck by his incomparable physical glory. Even after he attained Buddhahood, his physical presence was overpoweringly attractive, as is evident from the story of **Māgaṅdhi**.

If the Buddha's physical presence is so overpowering, one can understand how tremendous his Supreme, All-Enlightened Wisdom could be. He has no equal to his spiritual wisdom. No philosophical or religious leader of mankind has amassed such a body of knowledge as the Supreme Buddha. His wisdom was so profound that with a few words or phrases he could elevate an individual to sainthood. His wisdom was communicated to all mankind for over twenty-five centuries. Generations of saints and scholars have not been able o fathom his body of knowledge fully. The Buddha declared: "Whether the **Tathāgatas** appear or not, it remains a fact, an established principle, a natural law, that all conditioned things are transient (**anicca**), fraught with sorrow (**dukkha**), and that everything is soulless (**anatta**).

This fact **Tathāgata** realizes, and understands, and when he has realized and understood it, announces, teaches, proclaims, establishes, discloses, analyses, and makes it clear that all conditioned things are transient, sorrow-fraught and that everything is soulless. However much the Buddha may explain his Dhamma, its myriad implications and meanings are beyond the ordinary mind. In the **Majjhima Nikāya** the Supremely Enlightened One declared: "One thing only does the Buddha teach namely, suffering and cessation of suffering."

Again the Buddha said in **Udāna**: 'Just as, O Bhikkhus, the mighty ocean is of one flavour, the flavour of salt, even so O Bhikkhus, this Dhamma is of one flavour, the flavour of Deliverance (**Vimutti**)'. Only the Buddha could expound his Dhamma adequately. The Buddha made it quite clear, that the only help humankind can count on is his body of knowledge.

There has never been a war but
arose from greed- greed for land, greed for power,
greed for all the transient phenomena of life,
leading inevitably to strife. Let go, and strife ceases.
Think of the other fellow as a human being.
With nothing to gain except your common weal,
help him, and you help yourself.
It does not matter what language he speaks, what political
opinions he holds. You share the same planet,
breathe the same air, need the same food.
You cannot destroy him and survive.
Your fate is linked with his.

METTĀNUSSATI

MEDITATION ON LOVING KINDNESS

"Seeing all beings wishing to be happy as oneself,

Let him practise love to all beings as follows:

May I always be happy! Be free from ill!

So my friends, indifferent ones and enemies;

May the beings of this village always be happy,

So be those of foreign lands and of other worlds,

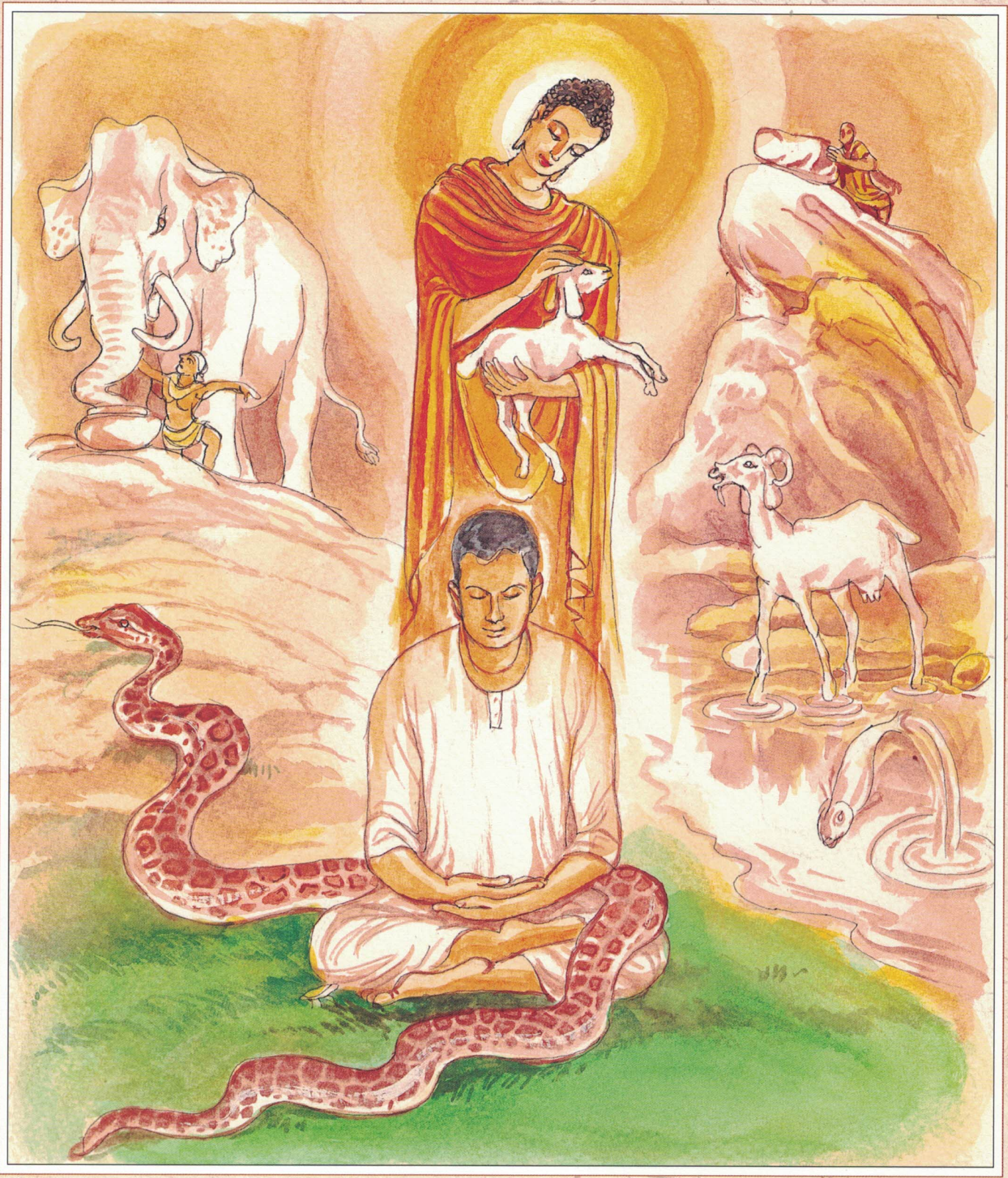
Countless beings and living things over all the worlds,

All persons, all creatures, and all that have come to exist,

And all those of male and female kind, all worthy and unworthy ones,

All in the ten directions, including gods, men and unhappy ones,

May they all be happy! Be free from ill!"



Attūpamāya sabbesaṃ - Sattānaṃ sukha kāmataṃ
Passitvā kamato mettaṃ - Sabba sattesu bhāvaye

Having compared oneself with others, one should practise loving - kindness towards all beings by realising that everyone desires happiness.

ATTŪPAMĀYA SABBESAṂ

"Right at the start, the meditation of loving-kindness should be developed towards oneself repeatedly in this way: 'May I be happy and free from hostility and trouble and live happily'. It is by cultivating the thought 'May I be happy' with oneself as example, that one begins to be interested in the welfare and happiness of other living beings, and to feel in some sense their happiness as if it were one's own."

Attūpamāya sabbesaṃ
Sattānaṃ sukha kāmataṃ
Passitvā kamato mettaṃ
Sabba sattesu bhāvaye

attūpamāya (atta upamāya) - comparing one's self with others
sabbesaṃ sattānaṃ - all beings
sukha kāmataṃ - desire happiness
passitvā - having realized
sabba sattesu - towards all beings
mettaṃ - loving-kindness
kamato - methodically
bhāvaye - should practise

One must compare one's self with others. In such a comparison, it will become clear that as I wish all happiness for myself, other beings, too, wish happiness for themselves. Realizing this, we must extend loving-kindness systematically to all other beings.

The ultimate goal of **Mettānussati** (Loving-Kindness Meditation) is to identify one's self with all beings everywhere. The disharmony of the world arises through the division of the world into two groups: "I" and "others". When this division happens, beings tend to oppose each other. Confrontation, conflict, disagreement etc. are the inevitable result of this kind of division.

The initial idea that is being established by meditation on Loving-Kindness is that all beings are one. The individual who embarks upon the meditation on Loving-Kindness is asked to take one's own self as the standard. Just as the meditating individual is keen about his or her happiness, all other beings, too, desire happiness for themselves. This is a difficult exercise for most individuals because their mind-set is self-centred. To adjust to seeing issues from the view point of others is not as easy as it may seem. Once an individual perceives fully that "just like myself, other beings, too, desire happiness", one can begin to initiate the process of meditating on Loving-Kindness.

If they, too, desire happiness as much as I do, my duty is to see that the happiness of others is not interfered with. This will be the best point from which the initial process of Loving-Kindness could be launched. Generally, one must start radiating Loving-Kindness.

One should think this way: " Just as I want happiness and just as I fear pain, just as I want to live and not to die, so do other creatures." So one should first become familiar with pervading oneself, as example, with Loving-Kindness. Only then should he turn to one admired and much respected. The meditation can then be developed towards him, remembering endearing words and virtues of that particular person. Then one could extend thoughts and words of **mettā** (Loving-Kindness) to that selected person. The thought could be somewhat like this: " **May that person be happy.**" This process can then be widened; the next object of meditation could be a dearly loved person. This could be eventually extended to an unknown person. From that person one could radiate towards an enemy.

This way Loving-Kindness could be projected even to people one resents.

Sukhī bhaveyyaṃ niddukkho - Ahaṃ niccaṃ ahaṃ viya
Hitāca me sukhī hontu - Majjhattā ca tha verino

May I be free from sorrow and always be happy.
May those who desire my welfare, those who are indifferent towards me
and those who hate me, also be happy.

SUKHĪ BHAVEYYAṂ NIDDUKKHO

"Mettā (loving- kindness) is defined as follows: Loving kindness has the mode of friendliness for its characteristic. Its natural function is to promote friendliness. It is manifested as the disappearance of ill-will. Its footing is seeing with kindliness. When it succeeds, it eliminates ill-will. When it fails, it degenerates into selfish, affectionate desire".

Sukhī bhaveyyaṃ niddukkho
Ahaṃ niccaṃ ahaṃ viya
Hitāca me sukhī hontu
Majjhattā ca tha verino

ahaṃ - I
niccaṃ - always
sukhī bhaveyyaṃ - be happy
niddukkho (bhāveyyaṃ) - be sorrowless
ahaṃ viya - just like myself
me - mine
hitāca - friends
atha - similarly
majjhattā ca -those who are neither close nor distant
verino - those who are enemies
sukhī hontu - may all these be happy

May I always be happy. May I be sorrowless. Just like myself, may my friends, too, be happy. May those who are neither close nor distant to me, too, be happy and sorrowless. May those who are my enemies, too, be happy and sorrowless. May all be happy.

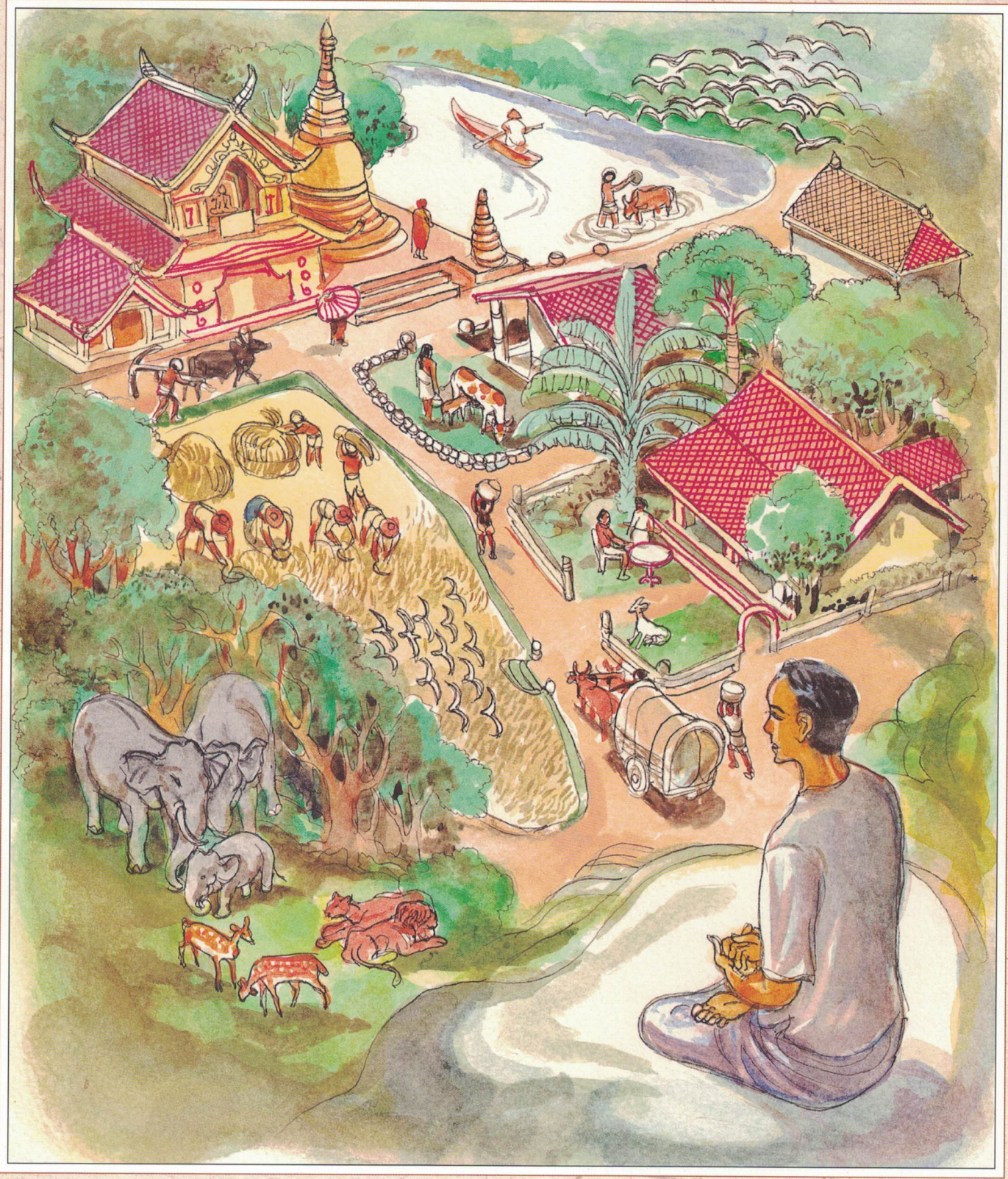
Loving-Kindness is a sentiment that should radiate from one's self to the world outside. In the ordinary mind such feelings are always self-centred. Most people do not feel the need to extend Loving-Kindness to the world outside. They can think only about themselves. The purpose of the meditation on Loving-Kindness is to train the human mind in the discipline of extending compassion to the world outside. This stanza indicates how this radiation of Loving-Kindness should begin and extend. It has to start naturally from one's own self as the centre. In order to achieve that purpose one must first think of wishing well to one's self. If one has to wish that one should become happy and sorrowless, it is a very easy process because the life of any individual is attuned that way.

Once this natural attitude of being kind to one's own self is developed to some extent, the meditator can extend this Loving-Kindness to one's immediate circle of relatives and friends.

Even that process is relatively easy because, to those who are disposed to be affectionate and friendly towards one, it is easy to extend Loving-Kindness. Your friends and close relatives are quite easy to be remembered with compassion.

From this circle, you extend it further afield towards those people who are neither close to you or not too distant from you. These are people in the middle distance. At the edge of the circle are those who are not willing to be friendly with you. They are those who hate you. They could be one's enemies. As the meditator develops in his practice of Loving-Kindness, he will be able to extend his compassion towards those who hate him and those people he thought were his enemies.

Once this state is reached his meditation on Loving-Kindness is complete. But what is central to this system is to extend Loving-Kindness with true feeling, and not as an intellectual exercise only.



Imamhi gāmakkhettamhi - Sattā hontu sukhī sadā
Tato paraṃ ca rajjesu - Cakkavālesu jantuno

May all beings who live in this vicinity, and those who live in other kingdoms in this world system be happy.

IMAMHI GĀMAKKHETTAMHI

"Mettā bhāvanā is the pervasion of loving-kindness or kind thoughts, seeking the welfare and happiness of all beings. In the Buddha's Teaching Mettā is the first of the four Brahma Vihāras (other three being Muditā , Karunā,and Upekkhā)."

Imamhi gāmakkhettamhi
Sattā hontu sukhī sadā
Tato paraṃ ca rajjesu
Cakkavālesu jantuno

imamhi gāmakkhettamhi - in these villages and settlements
sattā - beings
sadā - always
sukhīhontu - be happy and well
tato paraṃ - those who live beyond these
rajjesu - in various kingdoms
cakkavālesu ca - in the outer space: in other world systems too
jantuno - (may) beings (be happy and well)

The meditator who practises Loving-Kindness will extend the range of his **Mettā** further as he progresses in his contemplation. At this stage, the meditator concentrates firstly on his own village. The village consists of the houses of the villagers and the fields they cultivate. The Pali expression "**gāmakkhetta**" gives this significance.

The meditator gradually extends his range. He concentrates upon the other kingdoms, beyond these villages and settlements. Once the meditator has taken the whole world into his contemplation, he is ready to go even further. He now extends his Loving-Kindness to beings in the worlds beyond ours. In modern terms this includes the world-systems in outer space-in galaxies beyond our own galaxy. The spiritual outcome of this system of meditation is that the individual who meditates will become aware of his own insignificance. His egotism diminishes. His sense of narrow self-hood begins to shrink. While improving his meditation, the individual who exudes Loving-Kindness gets totally merged in the life process as he becomes aware of the vastness of the universe. The efficacy of the meditation on Loving-Kindness is determined by the transformation of the thoughts of the meditator into peaceful and harmonious concepts. When one practises this meditation constantly, Loving-Kindness becomes an integral part of the meditator's total being. **Mettā Bhāvanā** should be practised for 5 to 30 minutes daily for the following reasons:

1. To improve mental and physical health by overcoming your own anger, resentments, grudges and hatred, by developing tranquillity.

2. To improve patience, tolerance and understanding, resulting in more harmonious human relationships in the home, in schools, places of work and in society in general.

3. To overcome hatred, ill-will and other unwholesome thoughts directed towards you. The solution is so simple that at first some people tend to doubt it. You create an atmosphere of tranquillity simply by sending out thoughts of love, especially to those you think hate you.

4. For spiritual development.

Hate only feeds on hate; so thought vibrations of hate, worry, or tension which meet a screen of love can only dissolve or be turned back on themselves.

Samantā cakkavālesu - Sattānantesu pāṇino
Sukhino puggalā bhūtā - Attabhāva gatā siyuṃ

May all beings living in every world system and each element of life within such a system be happy and achieve the highest bliss.

SAMANTĀ CAKKAVĀLESU

"Mettā is a beautiful mental state which purifies the mind dispelling anger, malice, hate, jealousy, resentment, sorrow, and unhappiness. Just as a mother wishes the welfare and happiness of her only child, so does mettā wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings, irrespective of class, caste, creed, and race."

Samantā cakkavālesu
Sattā nantesu pāṇino
Sukhino puggalā bhūtā
Attabhāva gatā siyuṃ

samantā - all around
anantesu cakkavālesu - in numerous world-systems
attabhāvagatā - those who have received birth
sattā - beings
pāṇino - other forms of life
siyuṃ - if there are any
sukhino puggalā bhūtā - may they become happy and well

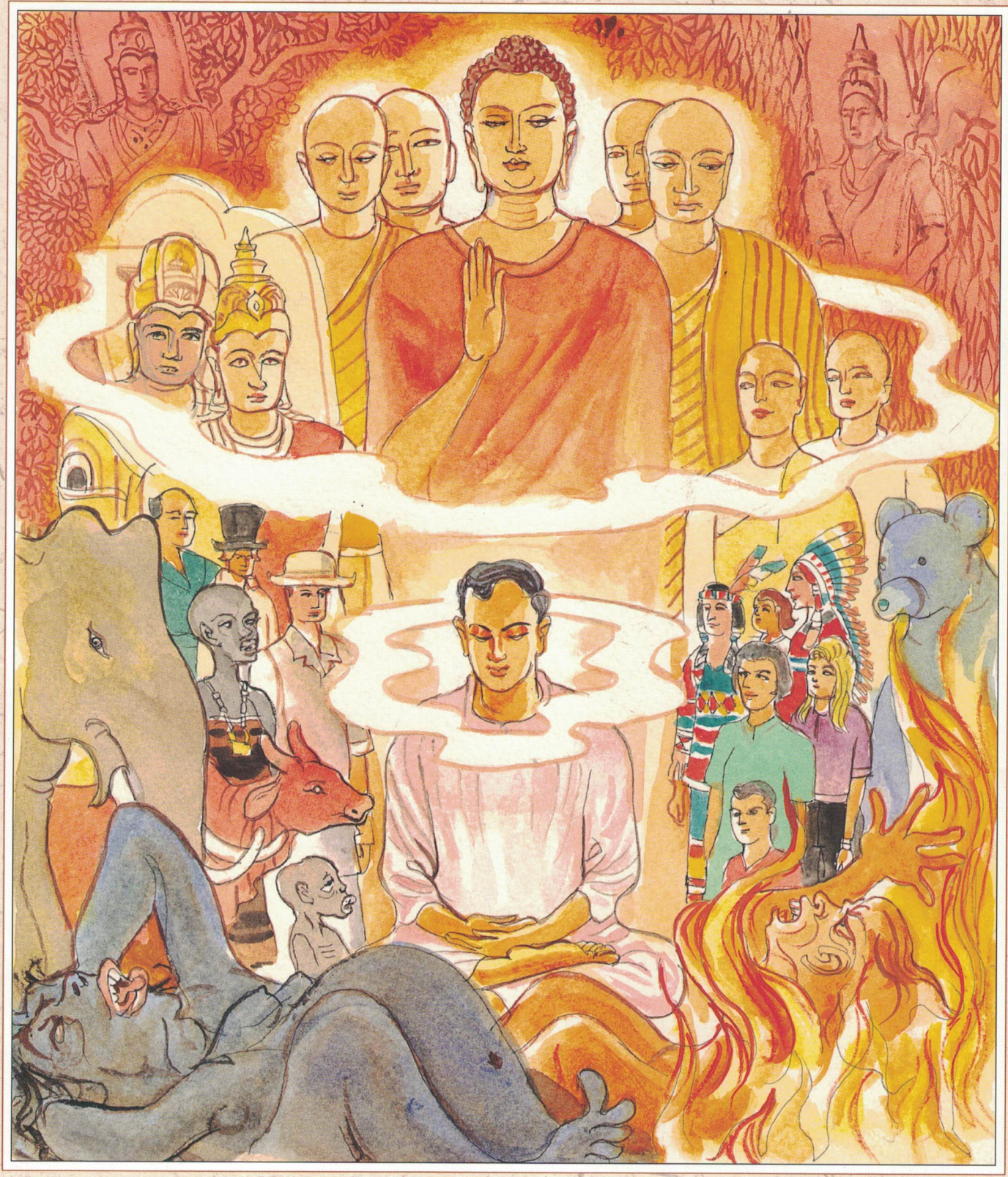
May all beings and all forms of life that have received birth in numerous world-systems, be happy and well. Here, in this stanza, the meditator concentrates on world-systems beyond ours. He thinks in terms of innumerable world-systems that lie beyond ours, and all around us. In this concept there is an impressive modernity. In this stanza the existence of world-systems beyond ours is routinely assumed.

In addition, the meditator concentrates on all forms of life that have received birth in these numerous world-systems. A distinction is made here between **sattā** (beings) and **pāṇino** (animate forms). Perhaps **sattā** (beings) in this context are intelligent beings, while **pāṇi** implies lower animate forms. But, irrespective of their status, the meditator extends his Loving-Kindness to all worlds, to radiate Loving-Kindness to beings, if there are any in those world-systems. The meditator wishes all these beings and life-forms happiness and well-being.

Extending Loving- Kindness to non-humans and various life-forms, is very much part of the Buddhist **mettā** meditation.

In most classifications of the good resulting to a person meditating on Loving Kindness, the goodwill and friendship of non-humans too are taken into account. This can be seen in the following list of the blessings of **mettā** meditation:

1. Comfortable sleep
2. Waking up comfortably
3. Not having bad dreams
4. Being loved by all humans
5. Being loved by non-humans
6. Protection by Gods
7. Not being subject to danger from fire, poisons and weapons
8. Mental poise
9. Brightness of facial complexion
10. Ability to face death without fear
11. The birth in the **Brahma** world after death for one who has developed concentration and who has not been able to attain **Arahantship** in this life



Tathā itthi pumā ceva - Ariyā anariyā pi ca
Devā narā apāyaṭṭhā - Tathā dasa disāsu cāti

Likewise, women, men, the noble, and the ignoble ones, gods, men and those in woeful states and those living in the ten directions may all these beings be happy.

TATHĀ ITTHI PUMĀ CEVA

"Just as a mother would sacrifice even her life for the sake of her own child, we should cultivate loving-kindness towards all beings. This feeling which a mother would cherish for her only child would be very sincere and genuine."

Tathā itthi pumā ceva
Ariyā anariyā pi ca
Devā narā apāyaṭṭhā
Tathā dasa disāsu cāti

tathā - in the same way
itthi pumā ceva - men and women
ariyāca - noble people
anariyā api ca - those who have not been able to achieve the noble status
devā - deities, gods
narā - human beings
apāyaṭṭhā - those in woeful states
tathā - and also
dasa disāsuca - may all those beings in the ten directions (be happy and well)

Similarly, may all beings, whether they are noble or ignoble, whether they are gods, deities or human beings, or else whether they are in woeful states, be happy and well. To the meditator on Loving-Kindness there are no categories.

He extends Loving-Kindness to all because they are all living beings. To preserve life, all beings should receive Loving-Kindness. This way, the meditator cannot make a choice. He cannot, for instance, extend his Loving-Kindness to only those who are in the category of **Ariyas** (noble ones).

They could be **Ariyas** in the sense of being high-born. They could be **Ariyas** because they have trodden the path prepared by the Buddha Himself. For a person to be classified as an **Ariya**, either the conventional factors should be present, like being born in a high family, or else he must be the follower of a high system of religion. **Anāriya** is a person who is not noble. This could be a category of person opposed to virtuous ways of life. **Anāriya** could also be a category of individual considered low or under-privileged by some social conventions.

The meditator extends his Loving-Kindness to gods and deities. He sends out his thoughts of Loving-Kindness to his fellow men. He does not overlook even those born in woeful states. They, too, need to receive Loving-Kindness.

The meditator must bring within his range of Loving-Kindness the whole of existence. He must, therefore, radiate thoughts of Loving-Kindness to all the ten directions. This way, he is requested to extend his Loving-Kindness to all beings in all directions.

Mettā Bhāvanā (Meditation on Loving-Kindness) is the most universally beneficial form of discursive meditation, and can be practised in any condition. Thoughts of universal, non-discriminating benevolence like radio waves reaching out in all directions sublimate the creative energy of the mind. With steady perseverance in **Mettā Bhāvanā** (Meditation on Loving-Kindness) a point can be reached at which it becomes impossible even to harbour a thought of ill-will. True peace can only come to the world through minds that are at peace. If the world could be persuaded to devote half an hour daily to the practice of **Mettā Bhāvanā** (Meditation on Loving-Kindness) we should see a more real advance towards world peace.

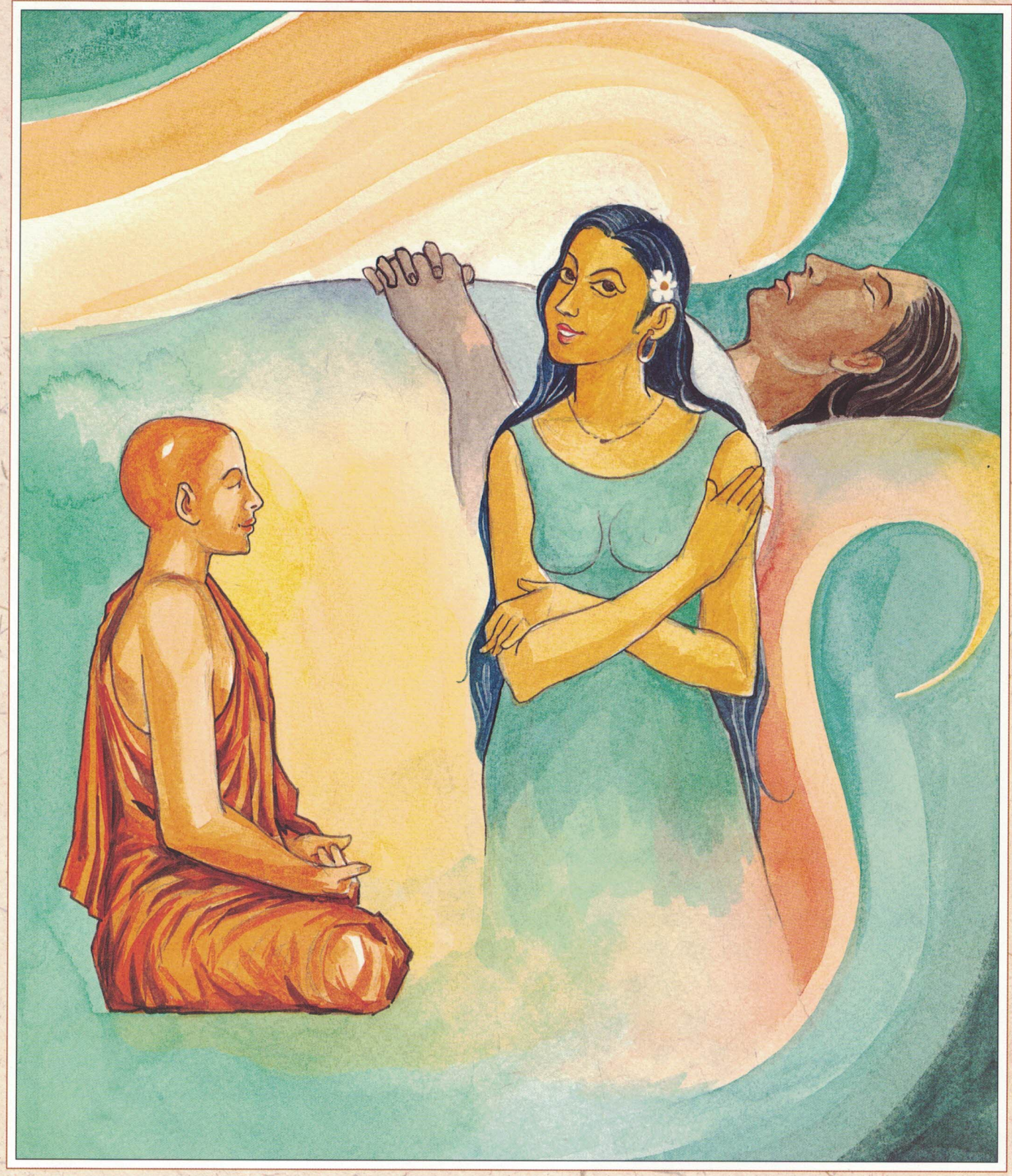
As a student of comparative religions,
I believe that Buddhism is the most perfect one the world has even seen. The philosophy of the theory of evolution and the law of kamma were far superior to any other creed.
It was neither the history of religions nor the study of philosophy that first drew me to the world of Buddhist thought but my professional interest as a doctor.
My task was to treat psychic suffering and it was this that impelled me to become acquainted with the views and methods of that great teacher of humanity, whose principal theme was the chain of suffering, old age, sickness and death.

Dr. C. Jung (1875 -1961)
Swiss psychologist and founder of the Jungian school of psychology

ASUBHĀNUSSATI

MEDITATION ON THE IMPURITIES OF THE BODY

This is the body's nature:
it is a collection of over three hundred bones,
jointed by one hundred and eighty joints,
bound together by nine hundred sinews,
plastered over with nine hundred pieces of flesh,
enveloped in the moist inner skin,
enclosed in the outer cuticle, with orifices here and there,
constantly dribbling and trickling like a grease pot,
inhabited by a community of worms,
the home of disease, the basis of painful states,
perpetually oozing from the nine orifices like a chronic open carbuncle,
from both of whose eyes eye-filth trickles, from whose ears ear-filth,
from whose nostrils snot,
from whose mouth food and bile and phlegm and blood,
from whose lower outlets excrement and urine, and
from whose ninety-nine thousand pores the broth of stale sweat seeps,
with bluebottles and their like buzzing round it,
which when untended with tooth sticks and mouth-washing and head-anointing
and bathing and underclothing and dressing would,
judged by the universal repulsiveness of the body, make even a king,
if he wandered from village to village with his hair in its
natural wild disorder, no different from a flower-scavenger or
an outcast or what you will. So there is no distinction between a
king's body and an outcast's in so far as its impure stinking nauseating
repulsiveness is concerned.



Aviññāṇa subha nibhaṃ - Saviññāṇa subhaṃ imaṃ
Kāyaṃ asubhato passaṃ - Asubhaṃ bhāvaye yatī

On perceiving this body as unsatisfactory conscious and non- conscious entity, one should meditate on its unsatisfactoriness.

AVIÑÑĀṆA SUBHA NIBHAṂ

"No one who searches throughout the whole of this fathom long carcass, starting upwards from the soles of the feet, starting downwards from the head, and starting from the skin all round, ever finds the minutest atom at all beautiful in it, such as a pearl, or a gem, or beryl, or aloes, or saffron or camphor, or talcum powder."

Aviññāṇa subha nibhaṃ
Saviññāṇa subhaṃ imaṃ
Kāyaṃ asubhato passaṃ
Asubhaṃ bhāvaye yatī

aviññāṇaṃ - when devoid of consciousness (when a person is dead)
asubhaṃ nibhaṃ -seeing inauspicious, unsatisfactory and repulsive
saviññāṇaṃ- even when alive
asubhaṃ- considered inauspicious, unsatisfactory or repulsive
imaṃ kāya - this body
asubhato -contemplating as repulsive
passaṃ - and seeing it that way
yatī - the meditating monk
asubhaṃ -the repulsiveness
bhāvaye - should contemplate

The meditating monk should consider this body as repulsive and unsatisfactory, whether the body is conscious (living) or non-conscious (dead). Seeing the unsatisfactoriness and repulsiveness of this body, the meditating monk should contemplate the body's unsatisfactoriness. When contemplating the unsatisfactoriness of the body, it (the body) can be looked at in two different ways.

You could look at a conscious body - a living person and contemplate that as unsatisfactory. You could look at a body that is non-conscious. That, too, is unsatisfactory. This way, the monk contemplates the body as totally unsatisfactory. The outcome of this initial contemplation is the establishment of the fact that the human body is unsatisfactory, whether dead or alive. This kind of contemplation of the body is quite contrary to the attitude most people have towards the body.

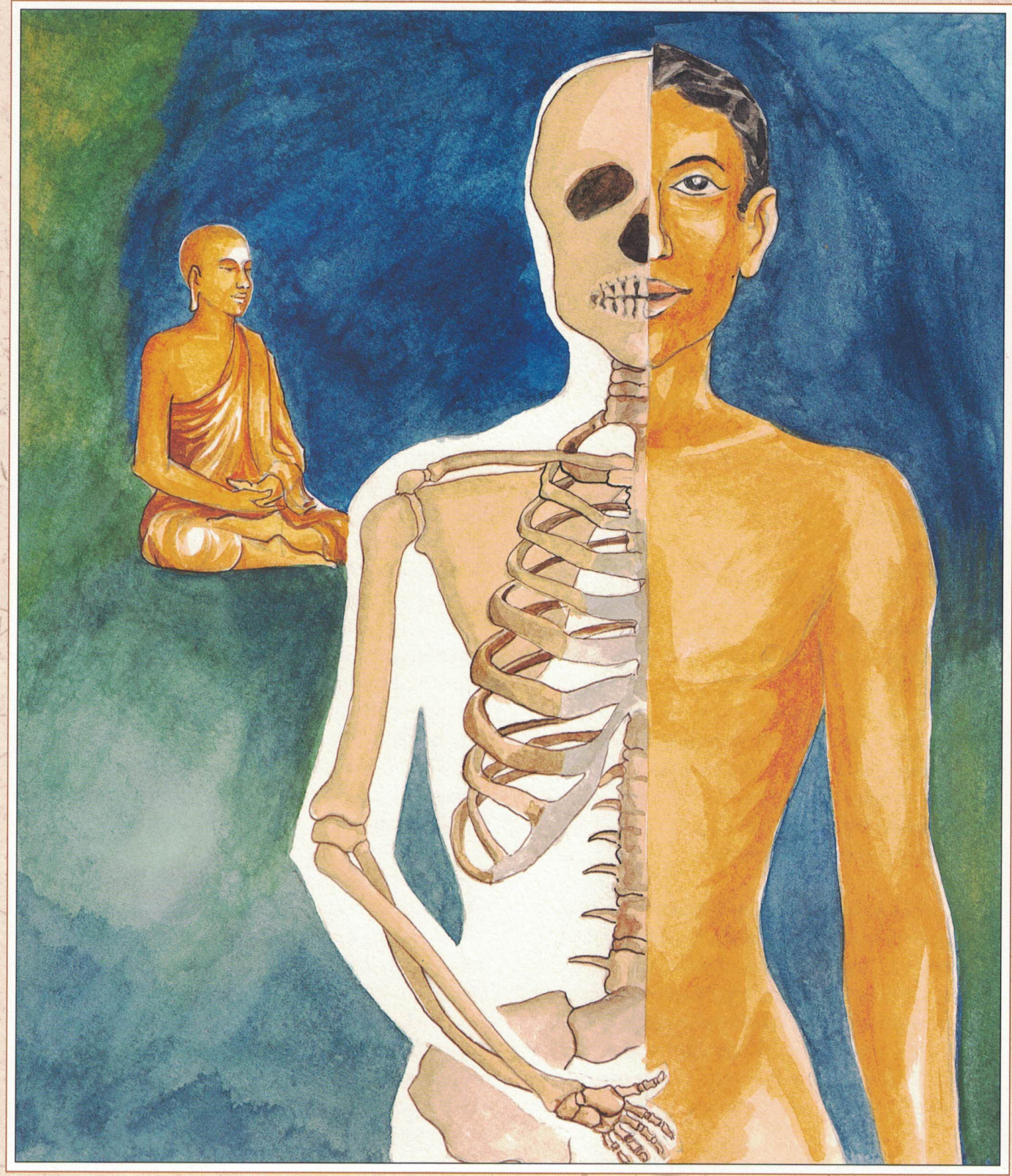
To them, the body is auspicious and highly satisfactory. They decorate it. They tend it avidly. They spend a good amount of time trying to improve its looks. To most human beings the living human body is beautiful and attractive. They are preoccupied with the idea of enhancing its appeal.

Generally, the body bereft of consciousness is considered unsatisfactory. But, the purpose of this contemplation is to emphasize that the body is unsatisfactory, both with or without consciousness that is, dead or alive. Monks are requested in this stanza to look upon the body as unsatisfactory, both ways when the body is alive, and when it is dead.

The Buddha has indicated the benefits of the contemplation of impurities in the following manner. "O, Bhikkhus, when mindfulness regarding bodily impurities is developed, the meditator savours the Deathless. When this mindfulness is repeatedly practised, it leads to a supreme sense of urgency- to supreme benefit, to supreme mindfulness and full awareness, to acquisition of knowledge and vision to a happy life here and now, and to the realization of spiritual heights."

When the body is alive, even the simple, ordinary functions of the body begin to seem loathsome. Consider for instance, what the ancients have to say:

The food and drink so greatly prized
The crisp to chew, the soft to suck
A single night will be enough
To bring them to putridity



Vaṇṇa saṇṭhāna gandhehi - Āsayo kāsato tathā
Paṭikkulāni kāye me - Kuṇapāni dvisolasa

The thirty-two impurities of one's body are disgusting in respect of colour, form, associable elements and space.

VAṆṆA SANṬHĀNA

Passa cittakatam bimbaṃ - Arukāyaṁ samuṭṭhitaṃ
Āturaṃ bahusaṃkappaṃ - Yassa natthi duvam ṭhiti

"See this body which has no permament existence. It is a body of sores, propped up by many bones. It is sick. It is beautifully made up and is well thought of by many."

Vaṇṇa sanṭhāna gandhehi
Āsayokāsato tathā
Paṭikkulāni kāye me
Kuṇapāni dvisolasa

vaṇṇa - colour
sanṭhāna - shape, form
gandhehi - bad smell
tathā - similarly
āsayokāsato - existing in association with each impurity
paṭikkulāni kāye - impure body
me - mine
kuṇapāni - impurities
dvisolasa - are thirty-two

When I consider my body in terms of its colour, its shape and form, its smell and odour, and also in terms of the association of impurities with other impurities, this body contains thirty-two impurities.

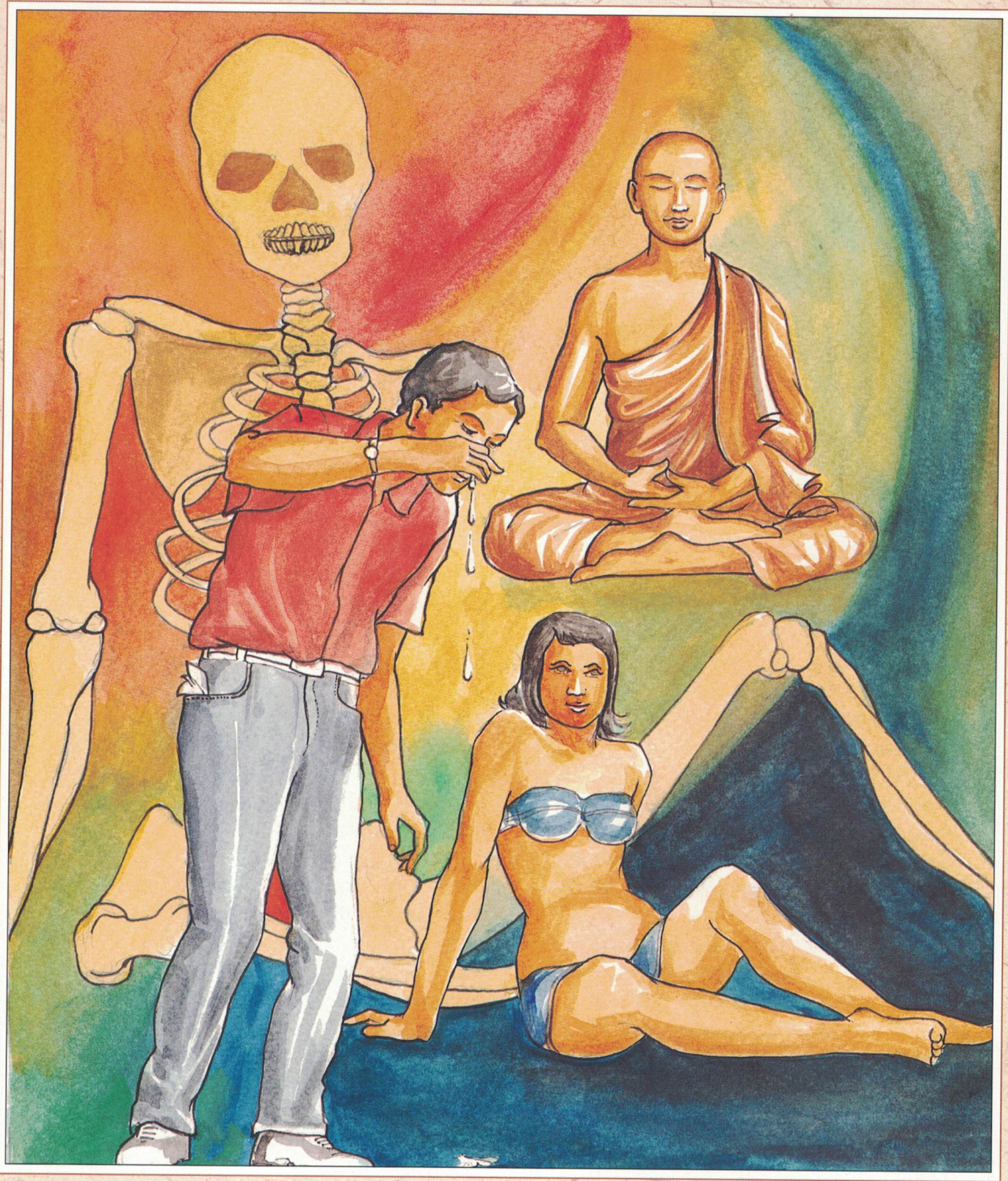
An individual usually does not get an opportunity to consider the true and exact nature of one's body. Considered in total, it is a collection of thirty-two forms of impurities. One could consider its colour. The body's shape and form could be considered. The smell, the odour of the body could be thought of. All these are impurities. But, that is not all.

All these impurities exist in association with other impurities that exist in association with each of these. When you contemplate the body in these terms, the body is full of impurities. These impurities are thirty-two in number. The true nature of the body gets revealed when we contemplate it intricately. This contemplation makes it clear that the body is a total bundle of impurities. In this kind of meditation, the number of impurities is usually classified as thirty-two. These thiry-two impurities are given in the texts this way:

"Atthi imasmiṃ kāye kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco, maṃsaṃ, nahārū, aṭṭhi, aṭṭhimiñjaṃ, vakkaṃ, hadayaṃ, yakanaṃ, kilomakaṃ, pihakaṃ, papphāsaṃ, antaṃ, antaguṇaṃ, udariyaṃ, karīsaṃ, pittaṃ, semhaṃ, pubbo, lohitaṃ, sedo, medo, assu, vasā, khelo, singhānikā, lasikā, matthake matthalungaṃ muttaṅti.

Seyythāpi Bhikkhave ubhato mukhā mūtolī puraṃ nānāvihitassa dhaññassa seyyathīdaṃ, sālīnaṃ, vīhīnaṃ, muggānaṃ, māsānaṃ, tilānaṃ, taṇḍulānaṃ, tamenaṃ, cakkhumā puriso muñcitvā paccavekkheyya."

"In this manner, there are in this body, hairs of the head, hairs of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery undigested food, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, serum, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine, brain. Monks, even as there were a provision bag opened at both ends and filled with various kinds of grains such as hill rice, paddy, green gram, soy bean, sesame, and dehusked rice and a man with healthy eyes,having opened the bag, were to identify the contents, thus: This is wheat (hill-rice), this is paddy, this is green gram, this is soya bean, this is sesame, this is dehusked rice. Monks even so, a monk reflects on this very body- from the soles of his feet up and from the crown of his head down, enclosed in skin and full of various impurities."



Patitamhāpi kuṇapā -Jegucchaṃ kāya nissitaṃ
Ādhāro hi sucī tassa -Kāyotu kuṇape ṭhitaṃ

The impurities that are within the body are more disgusting than those that fall from it, since impurities fallen from the body continue not to contaminate the body which rests itself on impurities.

PATITAMHĀPI KUṆAPĀ

Parijiṇṇaṃ idaṃ rūpaṃ - roganiddhaṃ pabhanguraṃ
Bhijjati pūtisandeho - maraṇantaṃ hi jīvitaṃ

"This body is fully broken down, a den of diseases, with putrid matter oozing out. It breaks apart easily. Life ends in death."

Patitamhāpi kuṇapā
Jegucchaṃ kāya nissitaṃ
Ādhāro hi sucī tassa
Kāyotu kuṇape ṭhitaṃ

patitamhā kuṇapā api - more than those impurities that issue out of the body
kāya nissitaṃ - are those impurites that are found within the body
jegucchaṃ - more repulsive than those
tassa - of those impurities that issue out of the body
sucī - a certain amount of purity could be seen
ādharo - those that bear these impurities
kāyohi - the body
kuṇape - impurities
ṭhitaṃ - is situated

Various impurities issue out of the body. These impurities are less disgusting and purer than the impurities within the body.

The human body tends to discharge a variety of impurities. These impurities are utterly disgusting. Once they issue out of the body, they repel even the person who got rid of these. It is true that these impurities are disgusting.

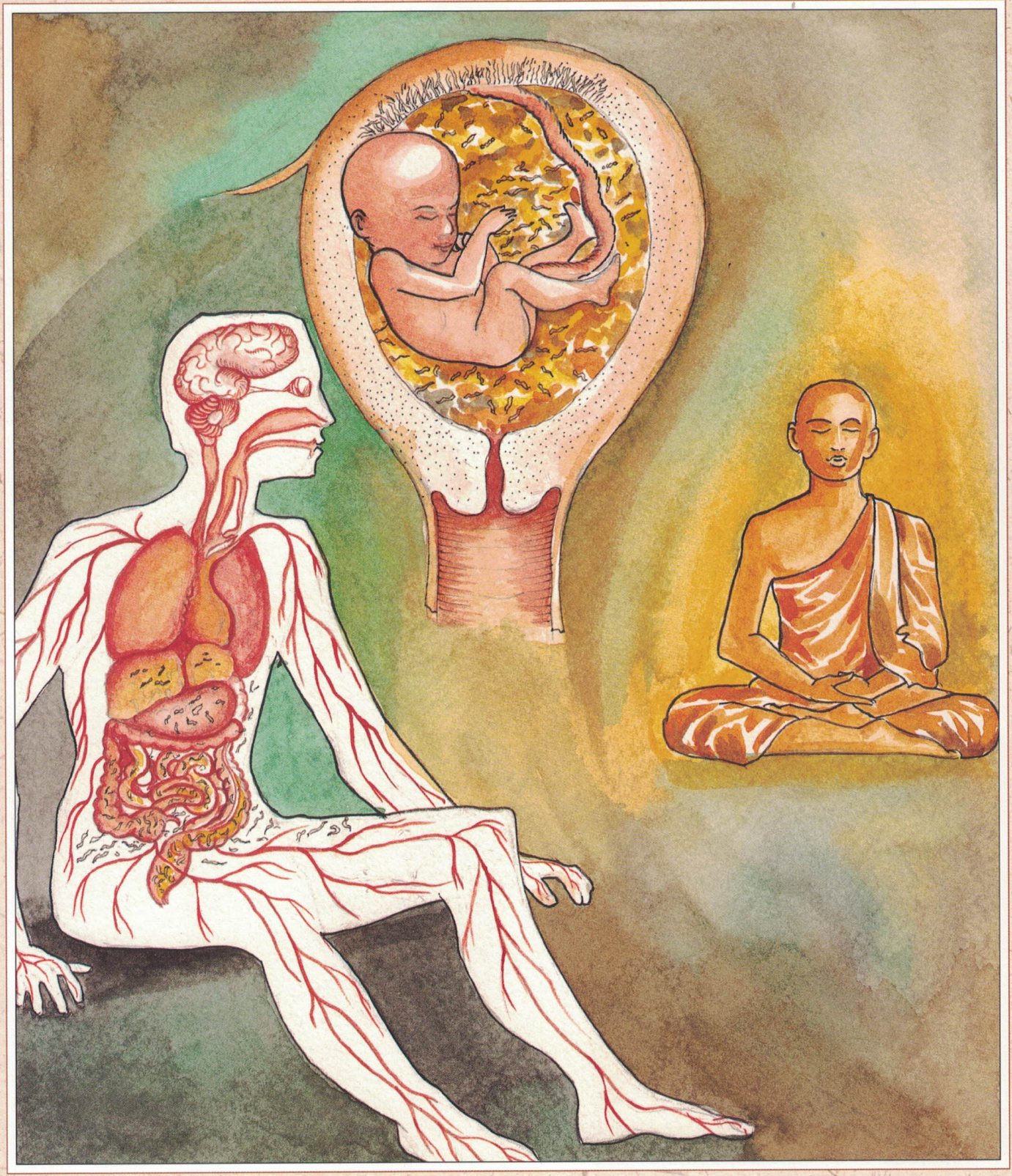
But, much more so are the internal organs of the body, out of which these impurities ooze. When we compare with the impurities inside the body, these impurities that issue out of the body seem quite clean. This is because the source out of which these issue is a heap of disgusting impurities. All orifices in the human body are avenues for these impurities to issue forth. These orifices by nature are rather minor openings.

If the minor quantum of impurities that come through these little openings is so disgusting, one can imagine how repulsive their source could be. This way, the impurities that issue out of the body give us an idea about how impure the human body is, inside. The meditator is instructed here to contemplate his own body, in terms of these impurities.

The purpose of this stanza, is to persuade the meditator to look at the reality of the body. The reality of the body's impurity, can be peripherally seen from some types of matter, that issue out of the body. The stanza makes a very startling point.

If some impure matter issuing out of the nose, the mouth, the ear or the eye seems so disgusting for any person, they can train themselves to meditate on the real nature of the body's impurity. What issues out of the body occasionally is only a stray bit of impurity. If that stray bit of impurity is so disgusting, one could easily imagine how utterly disgusting, the large deposits of impurities are, out of which these stray impurities issue, from time to time. Every thing that enters the body will eventually ooze out, in the form of impurities. This is described in the following stanza:

The food and drink so greatly prized
The crisp to chew, the soft to suck
Go in all by a single door
But by nine doors come oozing out



Milhe kimi'va kāyoyaṃ - Asucimhi samuṭṭhito
Anto asuci sampuṇṇo - Puṇṇa vacca kuṭī viya

Like a worm born in filth, this body is also born in filth.
Like a cesspit that is full, this body is full of filth.

MILHE KIMI'VA KĀYOYAṂ

" This body is shared by many; creatures live in dependence on the outer skin, inner skin, on the flesh, on the sinews, on the bones, on the marrow. And there they are born, grow old and die, evacuate, and make water; and the body is their maternity home, their hospital, their charnel-ground, their privy and their urinal. The body can also be brought to death with the upsetting of these worms."

Milhe kimi'va kāyoyaṃ
Asucimhi samuṭṭhito
Anto asuci sampuṇṇo
Puṇṇa vacca kuṭī viya

milhe - in waste matter
kimi iva - like a worm
ayaṃ kāyo - this body
asucimhi - in impurities
samuṭṭhito - came into being
anto - inside the body
asuci sampuṇṇo - is filled with impurities
puṇṇa vacca kuṭī viya - like an overflowing cess

This body has arisen in impurities themselves - very much like a worm in repulsive matter. Inside, the body is filled with all impurities - just like an overflowing cess-pool.

This stanza comments on the impure state of the body. The stanza stresses the fact that the body had its origination in the midst of impurities. It is compared to the arising of a worm in the midst of filth. This way, the body itself is impure. It has arisen, too, in the midst of impurity.

That is not all. Inside, too, the body is filled with impurities. The body, therefore, is a totality of impurities. It could, therefore, be compared to an overflowing cess-pool. When the body is contemplated in terms of its origin, its nature and in terms of its contents, it is totally impure.

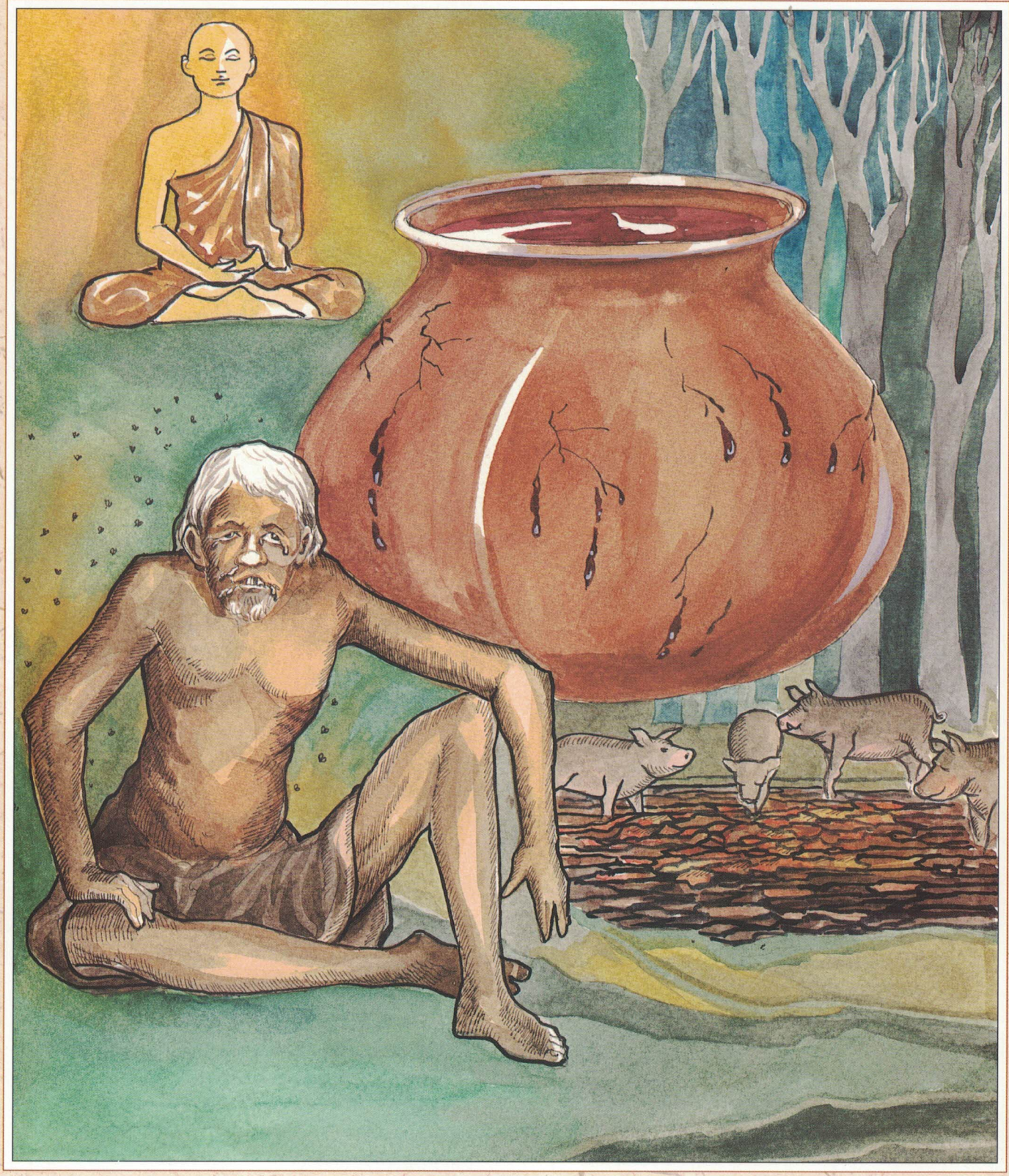
The body does not possess any element that could be considered attractive or beautiful. It can be of lasting value only if this heap of impurities is used for virtuous purposes.

The body, filled with all kinds of impurities, is the subject of meditation in several of the Sermons and Discourses delivered by the Buddha. He has used very vivid images to stress the impurity of the body.

In **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (The Great Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness) the Buddha emphasizes this concept in the following manner: " O Bhikkhus, in whatever manner a clever cow-butcher, having slaughtered a cow, and divided it by way of portions, should be setting at the junction of a four-cross road; in the same way, a bhikkhu reflects on just this body according as it is placed or disposed...." The Buddha has made repeated references to the repulsiveness of the human body.

The perception of impurity enables the meditator to see impure phenomena as they truly are. The Buddha instructed his disciples to repeat the recitation of the repulsiveness of the body a hundred times, a thousand times, or even hundred thousand times, for by so doing he becomes familiar with the subject, and his mind does not wander here and there. The parts of the body become clear, and appear in a series as though they were a chain held in the hand.

The contemplation of the impurities of the body is an antidote against the hindrance of sense-desire. The perception of impurity enables the meditator to see impure phenomena as they truly are.



Asuci sandate niccaṃ - Yathā medhaka thālikā
Nānā kimi kulāvāso - Pakka candanikā viya

Just as fat pours itself out from a pot full of fat, even so impure matter flows out from this body. Like a cesspit, this body is host to millions of worms.

ASUCI SANDATE NICCAṂ

Sace imassa kāyassa- Anto bāhira tosiyā
Dandaṃ nūna gahetvāna- Kāke soneca vāraye

"If, perchance, the body is turned inside out, people will have to take a cudgel to keep dogs and crows away."

Asuci sandate niccaṃ
Yathā medhaka thālikā
Nānā kimi kulāvāso
Pakka candanikā viya

medhaka thālikā - a vessel or a pot overflowing with fat
yathā - how
asuci - impurities
niccaṃ- constantly
sandate - oozes, issues forth
pakka - stagnating and fermenting over a long period of time
candanikā viya - like a cess-pool
nānā kimi kulā - to varieties of worms
āvāso - a shelter

Out of a pot full of animal fat, matter keeps on oozing - issuing forth. The body is quite similar to it. Out of this body various forms of impurities keep on oozing. This body, like a cess-pool that had been stagnating, rotting and fermenting over a period of time, is a shelter for a variety of worms.

This stanza spells out the utterly impure state of the body. The main image of this stanza is a pot of filth. Those who slaughter animals keep a huge pot for the fat oozing out of the carcasses of slaughtered animals. This kind of pot is ever oozing. Out of it issues forth various forms of fat and animal offal. This body, too, is like that kind of pot. Out of it, constantly, various impurities keep on oozing. Some of the bodily impurities are phlegm, smut, urine, excrement, tears and sweat. This body, therefore, is similar to a cesspool that has been stagnating, rotting and fermenting over a long period of time. It is the shelter for varieties of worms. The impurity of the body, is starkly seen almost immediately after life leaves the body. When the body is cast in the cemetery the process of decay sets in very fast.

In a series of stages, the body begins to disintegrate. Within one, two or three days the corpse begins to bloat, get discoloured and festered. Jackals, dogs, vultures, crows and hawks start attacking the corpse. It soon gets reduced to a skeleton with slight traces of blood. Next, the bones get disintegrated, the corpse ends up like a heap of dust, with no mark whatsoever of the life that occupied the body.

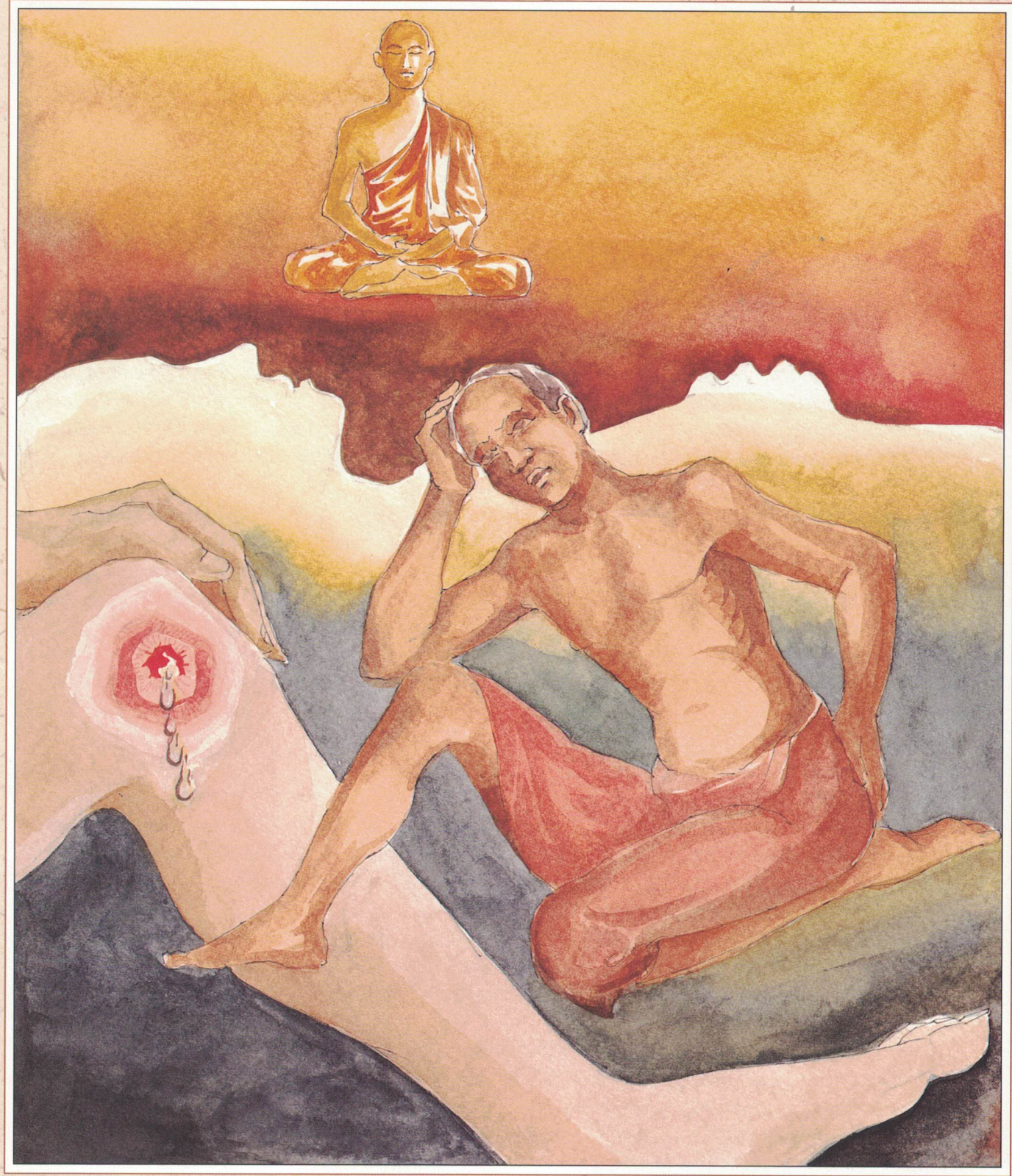
The process that takes place after life has left the body, happens even when a person is alive. Various forms of impurities ooze out of the body, while beings are still living and active.

Therefore, the contemplation of the impurities that ooze gives beings a profound notion of the real nature of the body.

Repulsiveness can also be viewed as follows in terms of the sayings of ancients:

The food and drink so greatly prized
The crisp to chew the soft to suck
Men like to eat in company,
But to excrete in secrecy

The food and drink so greatly prized
The crisp to chew the soft to suck
These a man eats with high delight,
And then excretes with dumb disgust



Gaṇḍa bhūto roga bhūto - Vaṇa bhūto samussayo
Atekicchoti jeguccho - Pabhiṇṇa kuṇapūpamoti

This body is like a boil, a disease, a wound that is incurable.
It is extremely repulsive. It is comparable to a decomposed corpse.

GAṆDA BHŪTO ROGA BHŪTO

Aṭṭhīnaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ - Maṁsalohita lepanaṃ
Yattha jarāca maccūca - Māno makkho ca ohito

"The body is a city of bones-plastered with flesh and blood.
There, decay, death, conceit and detraction are stored."

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Gaṇḍa bhūto roga bhūto
Vaṇa bhūto samussayo
Atekicchoti jegucchо
Pabhiṇṇa kuṇapūpamo ti

gaṇḍa bhūto - this body is like a boil
roga bhūto - is just like a disease
samussayo - collective
vaṇa bhūto - wound
atekiccho - it is chronic
atijegucchо - extremely repulsive
pabhiṇṇa kuṇapa ūpamo - similar to putrid offal

This body is like a boil - a disease. It is like a conglomeration of wounds. It is chronic - beyond cure. It is repulsive in the extreme. It is similar to putrid offal.

This stanza keeps on stressing the impure nature of the body. To establish its impure nature, several telling images are used. These comparisons have a dramatic effect on the reader, as they refer to a series of unpleasant experiences most people are familiar with.

In the first instance, the whole body is compared to a painful boil. Most human beings have personal experience of a boil. Therefore, this comparison has a telling effect on all people. The shock administered by this image is further deepened by the next comparison. Next, the stanza compares the human body to a conglomeration of wounds. Here, too, the experience is universal. All human beings are aware how painful one wound is. Therefore, they can understand the expression, a conglomeration of wounds. The situation is worsened by the next expression. These boils and wounds that affect human beings are generally curable. But, the "body" is an incurable boil - it is a chronic conglomeration of wounds. Given this context, one can imagine the alarming nature of the human body. Over and above all this, the body is repulsive. The total body is likened to a putrid object.

The deep contemplation of impurities of the body, is particularly important for the Buddhist system of spiritual advancement. Perhaps it is only in the Buddhist tradition that the human corpse is looked on as a theme for profound meditation.

In this stanza the meditator is trained to consider the whole of the human body as one conglomerate wound.

When the meditator begins to look upon the body as totally impure, the impermanence of the body dawns upon him starkly, leading to a total spiritual transformation.

At times, some are likely to wonder why such a marked emphasis is placed on the impurities of the human body, as is done in this stanza. The implication is quite clear. When the meditator realizes the disturbing nature of one's own body, when he becomes shockingly aware of the impermanence of the body, he will speed up the pace of his meditation as he feels the need to put an end to the body-process and achieve liberation. Therefore, the deep contemplation of the body's impurities provides a very strong impetus to the meditator to follow his path with unflagging diligence.

To the Buddhist, all phenomena are consequences,
including all personal phenomena. However
pleasant or painful they may be, he does not regard
them as the rewards or
punishments dispensed by some Supreme Being.
He accepts them as the results of his own Kamma,
his own past actions, his own destiny,
in this and in future lives.
It is a religion for adults. For this very reason,
it does not appeal to those who lack mental maturity.
It is too free, too unsheltered.
But, to the mature, it is the only reasonable
and acceptable way of life.

MARAṆĀNUSSATI

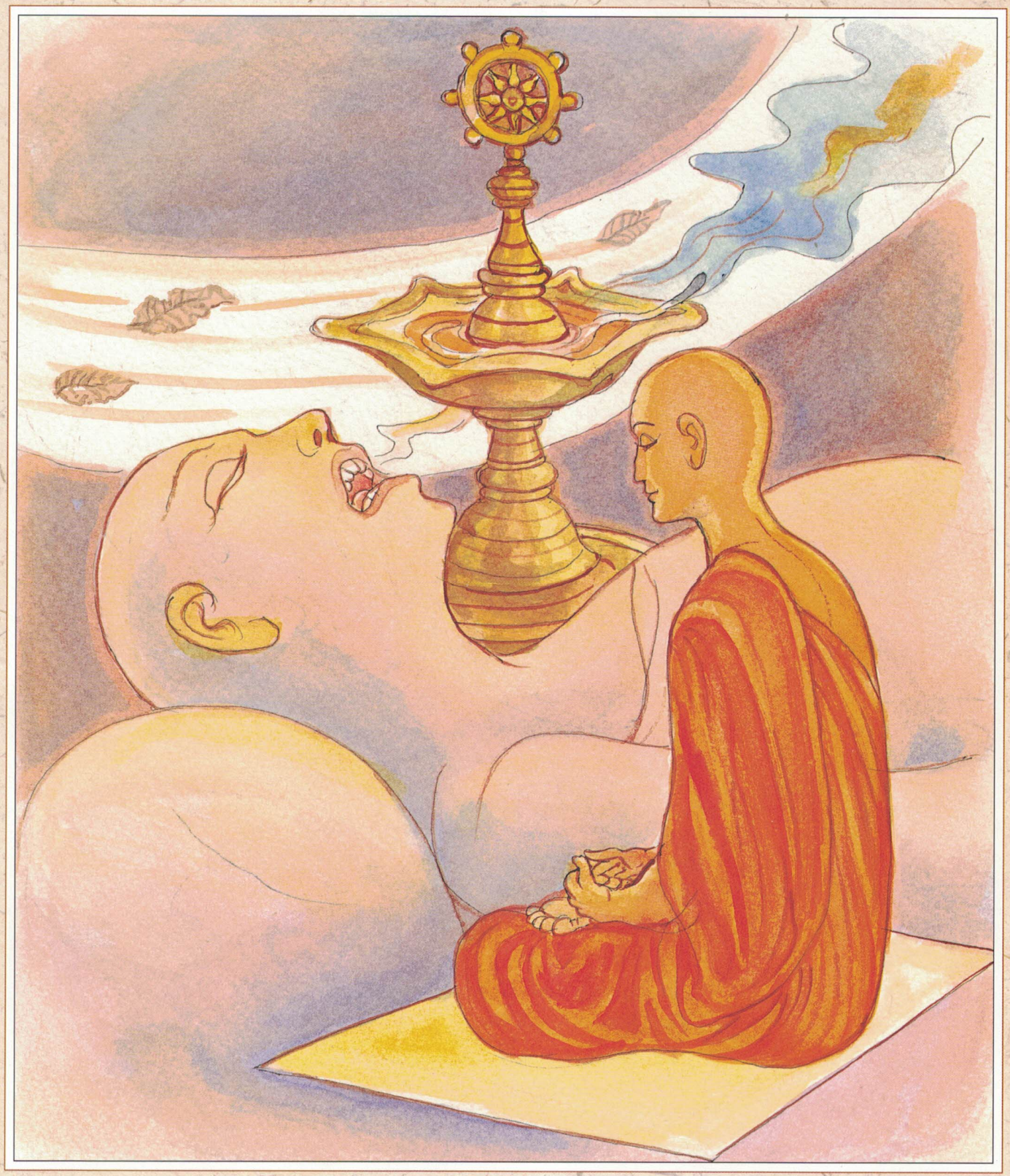
MEDITATION ON DEATH

"The nights and days go slipping by
As life keeps dwindling steadily
Till mortals' span, like water pools
In failing rills, is all used up

As there is fear, when fruits are ripe
That in the morning they will fall
So mortals are in constant fear
When they are born, that they will die

And as the fate of pots of clay
Once fashioned by the potter's hand
Or small or big or baked or raw
Condemns them to be broken up

So mortals' life leads but to death
The dewdrop on the blade of grass
Vanishes when the sun comes up
Such is a human span of life"



Pavāta dīpa tulyāya - Sāyu santatiyākkhayaṃ
Parūpamāya sampassaṃ - Bhāvaye maraṇassati

Seeing, with wisdom, the end of life in others, and comparing this to a lamp kept in a windy place, one should meditate on Death.

PAVĀTADĪPATULYĀYA

"Impermanency of things is the rising, passing and changing of things or the disappearance of things that have become or arisen. The meaning is that these things never persist in the same way, but that they are vanishing and dissolving from moment to moment."

Pavāta dīpa tulyāya
Sāyu santatiyākkhayaṃ
Parūpamāya sampassaṃ
Bhāvaye maraṇassati

pavāta - in a windy place
dīpa tulyāya - like a lamp
sāyu santatiyā - the mental processes linked with a given life-span
khayaṃ - the disintegration
para upamāya - taking a deceased person as an example
sampassaṃ - having analysed
maraṇassati - reflection on death
bhāvaye - meditate

A living person is a process of mind and body. This body and the mind-and-thought process attached to it are like the flame of a lamp lit in a windy place. It can get blown out at any time. We must reflect on Death, comparing one's self with a deceased person.

What is a living body? In reality it is a physical form that is alive, existing in association with a mind and a thought process. But, this living body is quite vulnerable. It is, in fact, very much like the flame of a lamp kept in a windy place. This simile is quite akin to the theme of the special song sung by Elton John, at the funeral service for Princess Diana, on the 6th of September, 1997. The title of that song is "Candle in the Wind". The flame of a candle kept in a windy place is very vulnerable - the slightest gust of wind can blow it out. It is the real nature of life. The living body is like the flame of a lamp or a candle in a windy place. No one knows at what time this body-mind process will come to an end. It is difficult for most people to come to terms with this transitory life of beings.

The most effective way to understand the nature of one's life and inevitable death, is to analyse the situation comparing it with the life and death of some person. You can reflect upon Death when you take some person's death as the object of meditation.

The image of the flame in the wind is familiar to most people. Therefore, that image will establish the idea of the ephemeral nature of life, in the mind of most.

The vulnerability of life has increased vastly with advancing modernity. Man's sophistication at various levels has brought about proneness to accidents and forms of diseases that are the by-products of the contemporary way of life. Unexpected bereavements, exposure to life-threatening situations and sudden multiple deaths are so frequent that man has special reason today to reflect constantly upon death as part of life.

In the ultimate sense the life-moment of living beings is extremely short, being only as much as the occurrence of a single conscious moment; just as a chariot wheel, when it is rolling, rolls, (that is, touches the ground,) only on one point of (the circumference of) its tyre, and, when it is at rest, rests only on one point, so too, the life of living beings lasts only for a single conscious moment.

However much humans may have advanced, relentless death cannot be subdued.

Mahā sampatti sampattā - Yathā sattā matā idha
Tathā ahaṃ marissāmi - Maraṇaṃ mama hessati

Just as in this world beings who once enjoyed great prosperity will die,
even so one day will I die too. Death will indeed come to me.

MAHĀ SAMPATTI SAMPATTĀ

Arthāgrhe nivurtante - Smasāne mitra bhandavān
Sukrutaṃ duskrutaṃ caiva - Gacchantamanu gacchati

" One's wealth stays at home. Friends and relations stop at the cemetery. Only the good and bad done by a person will follow him who departs."

Mahā sampatti sampattā
Yathā sattā matā idha
Tathā ahaṃ marissāmi
Maraṇaṃ mama hessati

idha - here, in this world
yathā - just as
mahā sampatti - great affluence
sampattā - acquired and enjoyed
sattā - beings
matā - died
tathā - in the same way
ahaṃ - I too
marissāmi - die
mama - to me
maraṇaṃ - death
hessati - will happen

In this world those who acquired great affluence, amassed much wealth, have passed away. In the same way, I too, will die. To me, death is quite likely to happen.

For almost all human beings, a great ideal is the amassing of wealth. They yearn to become highly affluent. After striving hard some of them acquire a great fortune. But, in spite of their high affluence, and the riches they have accumulated, they too pass away. Death claims them.

If Death happens to such beings of exceptional wealth, the meditator can contemplate his own fate. He will then realize that he, too, will certainly die. The thought occurs to him that "I will certainly die one day. Death will inevitably happen to me, too." He will then realize the futility of the attempt to accumulate wealth. He will also come to understand that the quest for worldly success will invariably end in Death.

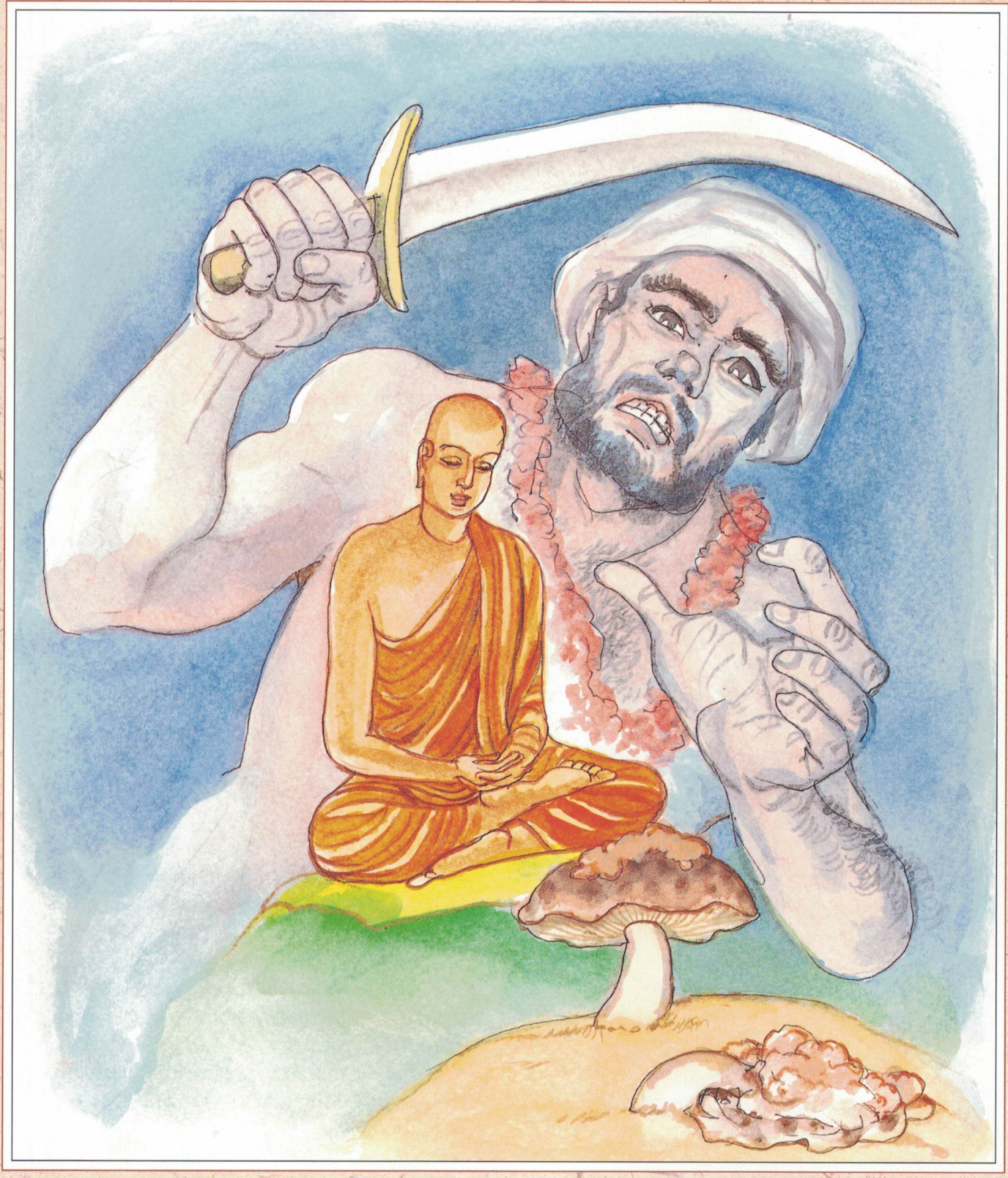
All human beings must make an attempt to acquire wealth. But, if it is done, with the assumption that it is the be-all and end-all of life, it will be a tremendous mistake. While attempting to make a success of worldly life, one must invariably attempt to achieve spiritual progress as well.

The constant awareness that "I will die one day" is the concept that will unceasingly prod the individual to enrich one's self through the acquisition of merit.

The "Reflection on Death" is considered the one form of religious practice that is conducive to the fulfillment of many aspects of spiritual life. This is stated in these words:

"Eka Dhammo, Bhikkhave bhāvito, bahulīkato ekantantana nibbidāya, virāgāya, nirodhāya, upasamāya, abhiññāya, sambodhāya, nibbānāya samvattati, katamo ekadhammo? Maraṇanussati"

" What is the activity which if practised and done repeatedly, will invariably lead to the disillusionment with the cycle of life, to detachment, to eradicate defilements to acquire higher wisdom, to realize the Four Noble Truths and to attain Eternal Bliss?" This one is Reflection on Death.



Uppattiyā sahe vedaṃ - Maraṇaṃ āgataṃ sadā
Maraṇatthāya okāsaṃ - Vadhako viya esati

This Death has come along with birth. Therefore, like an executioner,
Death always seeks an opportunity to destroy.

UPPATTIYĀ SAHE VEDAṂ

Na antalikkhe na sammuddamajjhe - Na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa
Navijjati so jagatippadeso - Yatthaṭṭhitaṃ nappasahetha maccu

"Not in the sky, nor in the mid-ocean, not even in a cave of a mountain rock, is there a hiding place where one could escape death."

Uppattiyā sahe vedaṃ
Maraṇaṃ āgataṃ sadā
Maraṇatthāya okāsaṃ
Vadhako viya esati

idaṃ maraṇaṃ - this Death
sadā - constantly
uppattiyā saha eva - accompanies birth (it is the constant companion of birth)
āgataṃ- comes to people
vadhako viya - just like a torturer-a killer, without informing
maraṇatthāya - with the intention of killing beings
okāsaṃ - an opportunity
esati - seeks

This Death constantly follows beings from birth on. Like an executioner stalking a person, waiting for an opportunity to strike, death too pursues beings with the intention of felling them. Exactly at the moment when a being is born, Death begins to stalk him constantly. From birth, this Death follows beings like an executioner. What Death is waiting for is an opportunity to strike.

This way, birth is the beginning of Death. Death has come along with us from the time we were born. People have no respite from Death. The only reaction possible for people is to engage in meritorious activities.

Man's perpetual dilemma is the thwarting of this "executioner". The totality of human life is a prolonged opportunity for Death to strike. Death strikes beings at various stages of life. At times, Death attacks a being even before he is born-in the mother's womb itself. Once he is born Death attacks him at will. In infancy, during childhood, when a person is young, Death may strike.

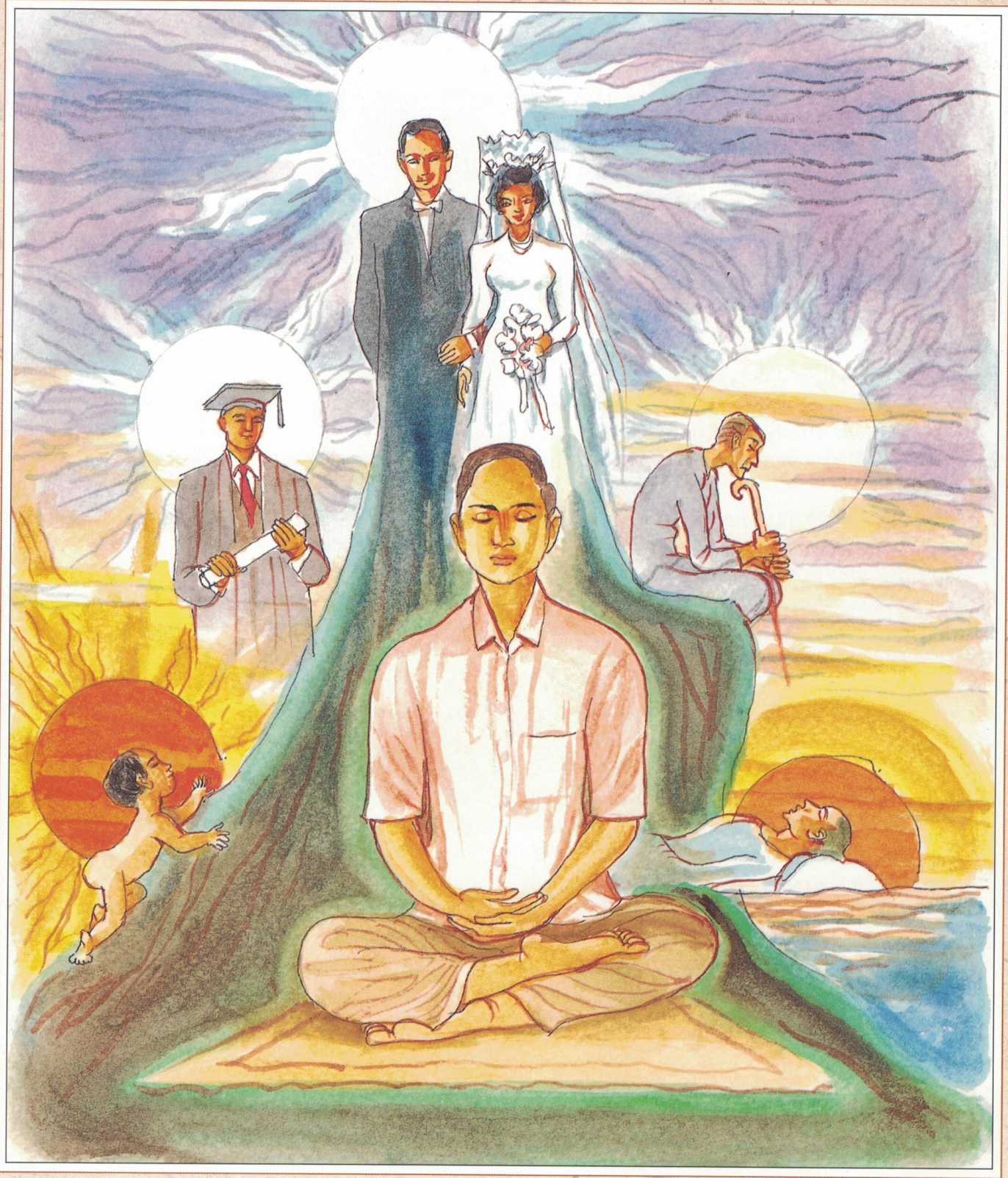
Why is Death considered an executioner? It is because Death attacks a person as a punishment, against the will of the people. If Death is looking for an opportunity to attack beings, do they have a chance of escape? None, whatever.

There is no place a being may take shelter to escape Death. Therefore, Death has all the opportunities it needs to strike.

The Enlightened One has admonished beings to be constantly aware of the perpetual presence of Death. The Buddha insisted that beings should be always conscious of Death. These are His words:
"Maraṇadhammo'mhi maraṇaṃ anatito'ti, abhiṇhaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ, itthiyā vā, purisena vā, gahaṭṭhena vā, pabbajitena vā"
"I am certainly prone to death, I have not overcome death. Everyone, women, men, householders and monks must constantly reflect upon this."

The Buddha made this statement especially for the guidance of those who tend to behave ignoring the inevitability of Death.

There are some ardently worldly persons who resent even the word 'Death'. They are the people who are 'intoxicated' either with the pride of their wealth, their youth, or their well-being. They should especially meditate upon Death.



Īsakaṃ anivattantaṃ - Satataṃ gamanussukaṃ
Jīvitaṃ udayā atthaṃ - Suriyo viya dhāvati

Life, without halting for a moment, and ever keen on moving,
runs like the sun that hastens to set after its rise.

ĪSAKAṂ ANIVATTAN TAṂ

Ajjeva kiccaṃ ātappaṃ - Ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve
Na hi no saṇganam tena - Mahāsenena maccunā

"One must get things done today itself. Who knows whether death will come tomorrow? One cannot have any compact with Death whose forces are numerous."

Īsakaṃ anivattantaṃ
Satataṃ gamanussukaṃ
Jīvitaṃ udayā atthaṃ
Suriyo viya dhāvati

īsakaṃ - even for a moment
anivattantaṃ - non-stop
satataṃ - constantly
gamana ussukaṃ - ready to travel
suriyo viya - like the sun
jīvitaṃ - life
udayā - from the day of birth
atthaṃ - until death
dhāvati - runs

Death keeps on going non-stop. It does not rest even for a moment. It moves on like the sun - there is not even a moment when it stops. Death is always bent on killing people. It runs from the moment of birth to the setting of life.

In nature Death is an unceasing process. Death never takes a holiday. It does not stop its activity even for one moment. The destructive nature of death can be compared to the relentless process of the sun. In this stanza, the sun is described as travelling non-stop for ever. The sun rises in the morning and keeps on travelling. In the evening it sets. No one can stop this unending round. The sun goes on and on that way.

In this stanza Death, too, goes on and on. What is emphasized here once more, is the relentless march of Death. Death goes on claiming young and old alike, and moves forward. When the stanza says that Death runs along like the sun, what is implied by it is that Death's routine never stops. This statement is made to enable the people to be fully aware of the inescapability of Death. Beings must be aware that whatever they did, Death is unstoppable.

As a meditation aid, this stanza has special effectiveness. The primary image in this stanza is the sun. Since everybody knows the sun, the concept of Death being as unstoppable as the sun, will make beings conscious of the relentless march of Death.

A meditator who has concentrated upon this stanza can always remind himself of the persistence of Death, every time he sees the sun.

When life is seen as a relentless process moving swiftly towards the inevitable end, which is Death, wise beings who reflect upon Death have one primary duty. That duty is of course, to make the best possible use of life. The most profitable way to utilize life is to devote it to virtuous activity.

Appamāyu manussānaṃ
Hīleyya naṃ suporiso
Careyyā ditta sīso ca
Natthi maccussañāgamo

Life span of beings is brief. Wise people consider it quite short. Therefore, they must turn to virtuous activity urgently, like a man whose head is on fire. There is no avoiding of Death.

Vijju bubbula ussāva - Jalarāji parikkhayaṃ
Ghātakova ripū tassa - Sabbatthāpi avāriyo

This life comes to an end like a streak of lightning, a bubble of water,
a dew drop on a leaf or a line drawn on water.
Like an enemy intent on killing, death can never be avoided.

VIJJU BUBBULA USSĀVA

Āyu usmāca viññānaṃ - Yadā kāyaṃ janantinaṃ
Apaviddho tadā seti - Parabhatuaṃ acetanaṃ

"When the life span breaks and the mind leaves the body, friends and relatives too leave it. Then the body becomes the food of animals and worms."

Vijju bubbula ussāva
Jalarāji parikkhayaṃ
Ghātakova ripū tassa
Sabbatthāpi avāriyo

vijju - lightning
bubbula - bubble
ussāva - dew drop
jalarāji - line drawn on water
parikkhayaṃ - disappears instantly
ghātako - assassin
ripu iva - like an enemy
tassa - that
sabbatthā api - whatever the place
avāriyo - cannot escape

Life of beings is as short-lived as a flash of lightning, or as a bubble, or as a line drawn on water. Like an enemy who wants to assassinate an individual, Death awaits. That Death cannot be avoided anywhere.

This stanza continues the concept of the ephemeral quality of life. However much people may understand intellectually that life is evanescent, in their practical day-to-day life, they cannot apply that awareness in a worthwhile manner.

Some of the images used here to emphasize the evanescence of life are very effective. The stanza says that life is as brief as a flash of lightning. This is an experience most people have. There is hardly anyone who has not seen a flash of lightning. It is the same with the drop of dew. The dew-drop, on the tip of a blade of grass, is very often taken as an image to establish the ephemeral quality of life. The drop of dew on the tip of a blade of grass could fall off and disintegrate. Or else, it will evaporate at the first sign of dawn. The third image is that of a line drawn on the surface of water. It vanishes instantly. It has no duration of existence at all. It is much more evanescent than both the flash of lightning and the drop of dew on the tip of a blade of grass.

This evanescence is the essence of life. Death stalks life like an enemy, awaiting an opportunity to assassinate. No being can escape its fury. Besides, in most instances, one cannot know where one would meet this arch-enemy of life - Death. Once again, in terms of these images, we can meditate on the short-lived nature of human life.

Once the ephemeral life leaves the body, there is no one who will be enamoured of the lifeless body. Therefore, the span of existence of any being is utterly brief. The change from life to death is starkly seen only when a person dies. But, the meditator must contemplate the fact that at each and every moment the body goes through the process of decay. Given this situation this bubble-like life that exists for a flash cannot be considered permanent.

In reality the duration of a person's life is just one breath. This life is impotent and frail. For the life of beings is bound up with breathing, it is bound up with the postures, it is bound up with cold and heat, it is bound up with the primary elements, and it is bound up with nutriment. Life occurs only when the in-breaths and out- breaths occur evenly. But when the wind in the nostrils that has gone outside does not go in again, or when that which has gone inside does not come out again, then a person is reckoned to be dead.

Suyasatthāma puññiddhi - Buddhi vuddhe jinaddayaṃ
Ghātesi maraṇaṃ khippaṃ - Kātu mādisake kathā

If death could come in an instant, to the Buddhas
endowed with great glory, prowess, merits, supernormal powers and wisdom,
what could be said of me?

SUYASATTHĀMA PUÑÑIDDHI

Sabbeva nikkhipissanti - bhutā loke samussayaṁ;
Yattha etādiso satthā - loke appaṭipuggalo;
Tathāgato balappatto - sambuddho parinibbuto

"All beings in the world, all bodies must break up, even The Teacher (The Buddha) peerless in the human world."

"Brahma Sahampati in Mahāparinibbāna Sutta"

Suyasatthāma puññiddhi
Buddhi vuddhe jinaddayaṃ
Ghātesi maraṇaṃ khippaṃ
Kātu mādisake kathā

suyasa - extremely glorious
thāma - physical power and spiritual prowess
puññiddhi - high merit and exalted spiritual achievement
buddhi vuddhe - higher advanced in intellect
jinaddayaṃ - both silent Buddhas and Supremely Enlightened Buddhas
maraṇaṃ - Death
khippaṃ - quickly
ghātesi - destroyed
mādisake - about people like us
kātu kathā - what is there to say

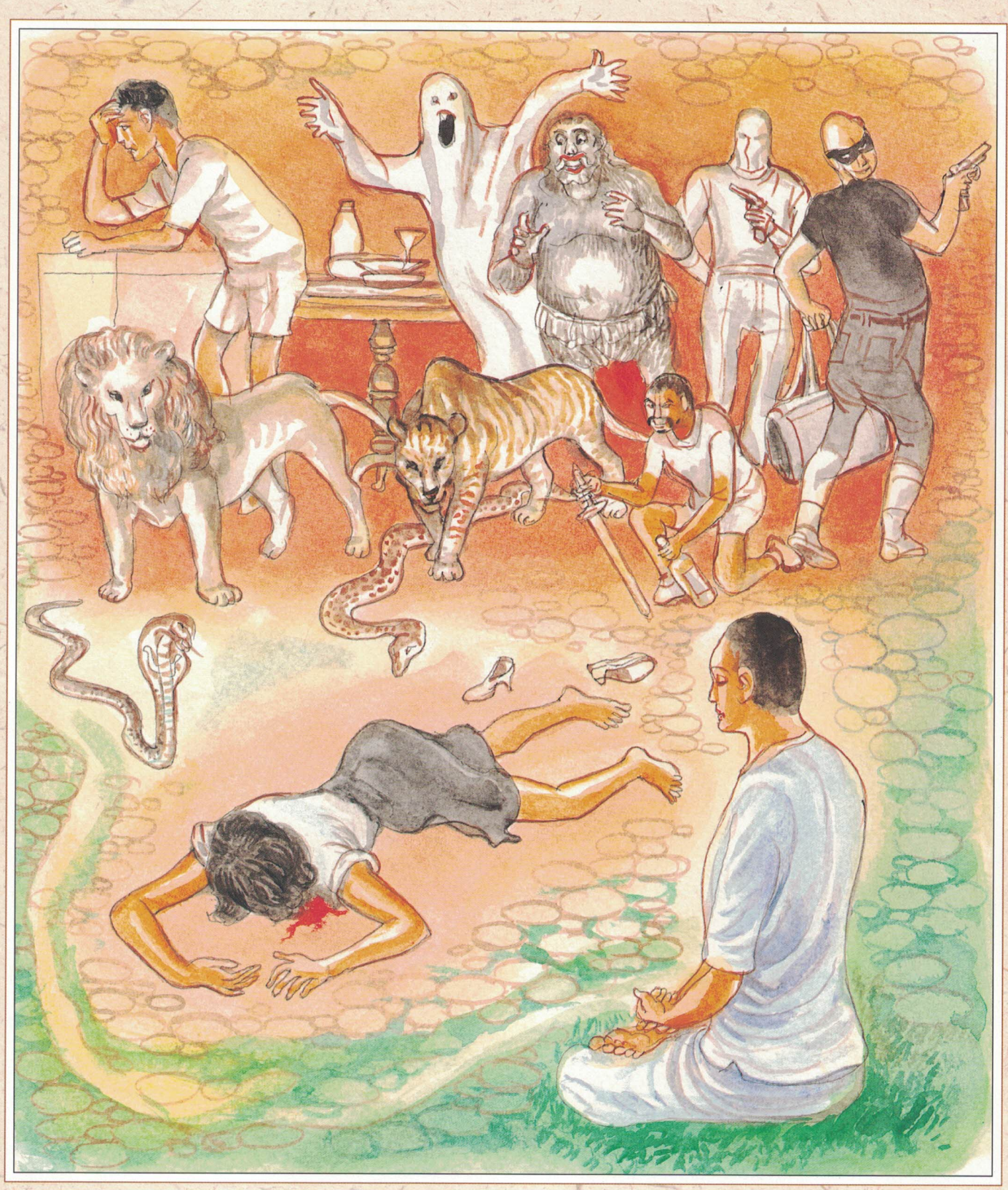
Death claims even the most glorious of persons. Death has destroyed people of high physical power and great spiritual prowess. Individuals of exceptional merit and miraculous power have fallen victim to Death. Even silent Buddhas and Buddha the Supremely Enlightened, have been conquered by Death. If that were so, what can be said about a person like me?

This stanza emphasizes the fact that beings of all categories and achievements fall victim to Death, without any exception. In other words, Death does not respect anyone. It has no deference whatsoever for those who are outstanding in various ways. The stanza gives examples of those who fell victim to Death. Death claims those of great glory and high fame. Death has destroyed people who had acquired much merit. Those persons who had high psychic power fell victim to Death. Persons of high wisdom, too, fell into the hands of Death. Death did not spare silent Buddhas. Nor did Death spare the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One. With one fell swoop Death destroys all of them quickly.

What is the invariable moral of all this? The stanza draws this conclusion: If this is what Death does to such outstanding beings, is there anything that can be said about the likes of us? Death does not stop for anyone. Nor does Death categorize various individuals. It just goes on taking life, in whatever way it likes. In some instances Death is quite swift. In the course of our "Reflections on Death", one should become exceptionally clear in mind that Death will never spare anyone on earth. If the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, Himself fell victim to Death, there is nothing that should be said about others.

Death does not hold anyone in high esteem. The Supreme Buddha, the greatest person who has lived on earth, passed away in the Great Demise. This is the most dramatic proof to show that Death does not spare even the greatest. It is at the passing away of the Buddha that the Venerable Anuruddha uttered this verse:

"No breathing in and out-just with steadfast heart,
the sage who is free from lust has passed away to peace. With mind unshaken he endured all pains:
By **Nibbāna** the Illumined's mind is freed."



Paccayānaṃ ca vekalyā - Bāhirajjhattupaddavā
Marāmoraṃ nimesāpi - Maramāno anukkhananti

Dying every instant, I shall die within the twinkling of an eye,
for want of food, and through internal ailments or through external injuries.

PACCAYĀNAṂ CA VEKALYĀ

Yamekarattiṃ paṭhamaṃ- Gabbhe vasatimānavo
Abbhutthitova so yāti - Sagacchaṃ na nivattati

" From the time a being spends one night in the mother's womb, he moves swiftly towards death, like a cloud in the sky. Until Death he speeds on and gets no rest on the way."

Ayoghara, Jātaka

Paccayānaṃ ca vekalyā
Bāhirajjhattupaddavā
Marāmoraṃ nimesāpi
Maramāno anukkhananti

anukkhanaṃ - moment after moment
maramāno - subject to disintegration
paccayānaṃ - provision
vekalyā ca - by not receiving
bāhira ajjhatta upadda vā - due to exterior or internal disasters
nimesā oraṃ api - in a split-second
marāmi - I will die

The person described as "I" is made up of elements that are perpetually in flux. Both my body and mind are changing every moment. I can die in a variety of ways. I can die, for instance, because requisites such as food and water are not received. In the same way I could die because of external reasons - like the action of enemies. Or else, I could die due to such internal causes as diseases. I could die in a very brief moment - during the time taken to blink. This is the real nature of life and death of beings.

Consider the life of a being. Think of one's own life. "I" am made up of various elements. All these elements are in perpetual flux. No single cell of the body remains unchanged for several moments. Each moment, these change. This change happens not only in the body. It is the same with the mind, as well. The thought-processes change each moment. This way, the person called "I" is a series of changes.

In the midst of these changes, life has to be continued. Life must go on. To keep life going on, beings have to take various provisions. Air, food and water are essential requisites. There are other numerous needs that have to be fulfilled for life to go on. Death can occur if these requisites are not found.

A being can die due to external causes, too. These external causes could be threats from enemies. Natural disasters could cause death of beings. Wild beasts, snakes, robbers, thieves could spell death to beings. Internal causes like diseases can bring about a person's death. In an instant an individual may be struck down by Death.

This stanza reflects upon the unceasing change of a person's body and mind. Each moment you die - in body and mind. Death has numerous ways in which it can claim the lives of beings. Today, Death may take over hundreds of lives in just a split second. Lives lost in air crashes are gone before one could blink one's eye. Diseases that did not exist in the world in the past ages, may suddenly destroy hundreds of human lives. Therefore in reflecting upon Death, one must also cultivate loving-kindness towards all beings as we all share the common legacy of Death.

Unexpected death, stalled life in a variety of ways. The wide-spread availability of fire-arms has become a considerable external threat even to innocent lives. Even school-children resort to fire-arms with utterly shocking tragic outcomes.

We who are mere worldlings cannot pretend to
that mastery over self which was characteristic
of the Buddha and the Arahantas.
To us, anger is a problem.
But there are things we can do.
There are ways of thinking which make the
control of anger less difficult. To begin with, we should
understand that the failure to control anger
is always a sign of weakness, never a sign of strength.
We all like to be considered strong and masterful.
Anger, when it takes charge of us, does make
us feel strong and more masterful
than we do normally. But this is a mere delusion,
misleading and dangerous. In truth, we are, at such times,
weaker and less efficient than normal.
Whenever we get angry we should realize that the
strength we feel is not the strength of the
charioteer in us. It is the strength of the runaway horse.
We should immediately try to put the
charioteer back in control. If we can do this, we are masters.
If we cannot, we are slaves.

ATTHA MAHĀ SAṂVEGA VATTHU

EIGHT-FOLD CAUSES OF GREAT SORROW

As regards sorrow, etc., sorrow is a burning in the mind in one affected by loss of relatives, and so on. Although in meaning it is the same as grief, nevertheless it has inner consuming as its characteristic, its function is completely to consume the mind. It is manifested as continual sorrowing. It is suffering because it is intrinsic suffering and because it is a basis for suffering.

Hence this is said:

Sorrow is a poisoned dart
That penetrates a being's heart,
Setting up a burning there
Like burning with a red-hot spear.
This state of mind brings future pain
Such as disease, and then again
Ageing and death, so one may tell
Wherefore it is called pain as well.

"Suffering due to birth, old age, disease, death, past births, future births and the suffering experienced in search of food during this present life, are the eight causes of sorrow. No human being can avoid these eight causes."

BHĀVETVĀ CATURĀRAKKHĀ

Human life is overwhelmed by suffering.
In these three stanzas, the eight primary causes of human sorrow are classified. When we are born we inherit a vast hoard of sorrows.

Bhāvetvā caturārakkhā
Āvajjeyya anantaraṃ
Mahā saṃvega vatthūni
Aṭṭha aṭṭhita vīriyo

caturārakkhā - Four-fold Doctrines of Protection
bhāvetvā - having meditated
anantaraṃ - after that
aṭṭhitavīriyo - unflagging determination
aṭṭha mahā saṃvega vatthūni - Eight-fold Reasons for Great Sorrow
āvajjeyya - meditate on

After contemplating the meditation upon the Four-fold Doctrines of Protection, these meditators of unflagging effort should start reflecting upon the Eight-fold Causes of Great Sorrow.

Jāti jarā vyādhi cutī apāyā
Atīta appattaka vaṭṭa dukkhaṃ
Idāni āhāra gaveṭṭhi dukkhaṃ
Saṃvega vatthūni imāni aṭṭha

jāti - birth
jarā - decay, growing old
vyādhi - disease
cutī - death
apāyā - being born in woeful states
atīta vaṭṭa dukkhaṃ - suffering experienced in the past births
appattaka vaṭṭa dukkhaṃ - suffering likely to be experienced in the future
idāni - in the present birth
āhāra gaveṭṭhi dukkhaṃ - suffering through the seeking of food
imāni - these are
aṭṭha - eight
saṃvega vatthūni - causes for sorrow

"Birth, decay and deterioration, disease, death, being born in woeful states, having endured suffering in the past births, suffering that is likely to happen in the future,suffering in the present birth due to the need to seek food are the eight-fold causes of sorrow."

Pāto ca sāyamapi ce va imaṃ vidhiññū
Āsevate satatamatta hitābhilāsī
Pappoti soti vipulaṃ hata pāri pantho
Seṭṭhaṃ sukhaṃ munivisiṭṭha
mataṃ sukhena cāti

satataṃ - constantly
atta hitābhi lāsī - desiring one's own benefit
imaṃ vidiññū - those who know these five -fold factors of anxiety
pāto ca - in the morning
sāyaṁ apica - in the evening too
evaṃ - in the same way
āseva te - practise these
so - that person (meditator)
hata pāripantho - having eradicated evil
seṭṭhaṃ - great
muni visiṭṭhaṃ - praised by the great sage
ativipulaṃ - exquisite
amataṃ sukhaṃ - eternal bliss
sukhena - with ease
pappoti - will attain

An individual who wishes to achieve his well-being should appreciate these eight causes of sorrow. Such individuals must observe these morning and evening. Such individuals will overcome hindrances, and will, with ease, gain the Eternal Bliss which is great, exquisite and is praised by the Buddha.

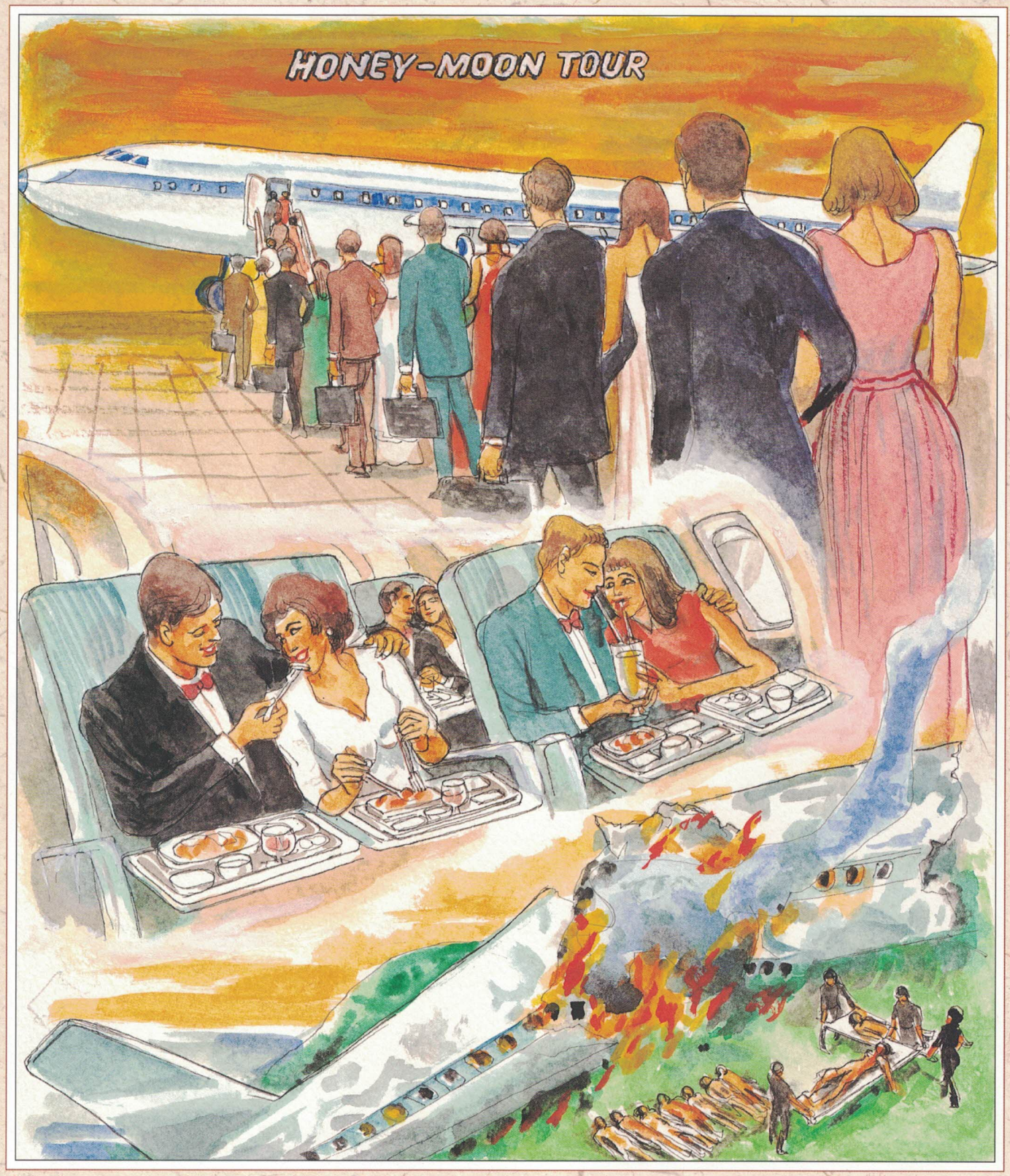
I have no hesitation in declaring that I owe a
great deal to the inspiration that
I have derived from the life of the Enlightened One.
Asia has a message for the whole world,
if only it would live up to it. There is the imprint of
Buddhistic influence on the whole of Asia,
which includes India, China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon,
and the Malay states. For Asia to be not for Asia
but for the whole world, it has to re-learn
the message of the Buddha and deliver it to the whole world.
His love, his boundlesss love went out as much
to the lower animal, to the lowest life as to human beings.
And he insisted upon purity of life.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)
Indian thinker and apostle of non violence

SALLA SUTTA

THE SHAFT OF GRIEF

As to the limitedness of the extent:
the extent of human life is short now.
One who lives long, lives a hundred years, more or less.
Hence the Blessed One said:
"Bhikkhus, this life is short now. There is a new life to be gone to,
there are profitable (deeds) to be done, there is the life of purity to be led.
There is no not-dying for the born.
He who lives long lives a hundred years, more or less...
The life of human kind is short;
A wise man holds it in contempt,
And acts as one whose head is burning;
Death will never fail to come"



Animitta manaññ**ātaṃ - Maccānaṃ idha jīvitaṃ**
Kasīraṃ ca parittaṃca - Taṃca dukkhena saññyutaṃ

The life of mortals in this world, brief and beset by woes,
can neither be calculated nor gauged.

ANIMITTA MANAÑÑĀTAṂ

*"When this physical body is no more capable of functioning,
energies do not die with it, but continue to take some other shape or form,
which we call another life."*

Animitta manaññātaṃ
Maccānaṃ idha jīvitaṃ
Kasīraṃ ca parittaṃca
Taṃca dukkhena saññyutaṃ

idha - in this world
maccānaṃ - of human beings
jīvitaṃ - life
animittaṃ - bereft of signs of death
aññātaṃ - cannot know when death will occur
kasīraṃ ca - full of suffering
parittaṃ ca limited to a brief period
taṃca - that too
dukkhena saññyutaṃ - full of sorrow

In this world, the life of human beings is devoid of signs that indicate death. No one can know exactly at what point death will come. Then again, human life is full of suffering. Besides, human life is limited to a brief period. But, even that brief span of life is fraught with sorrow.

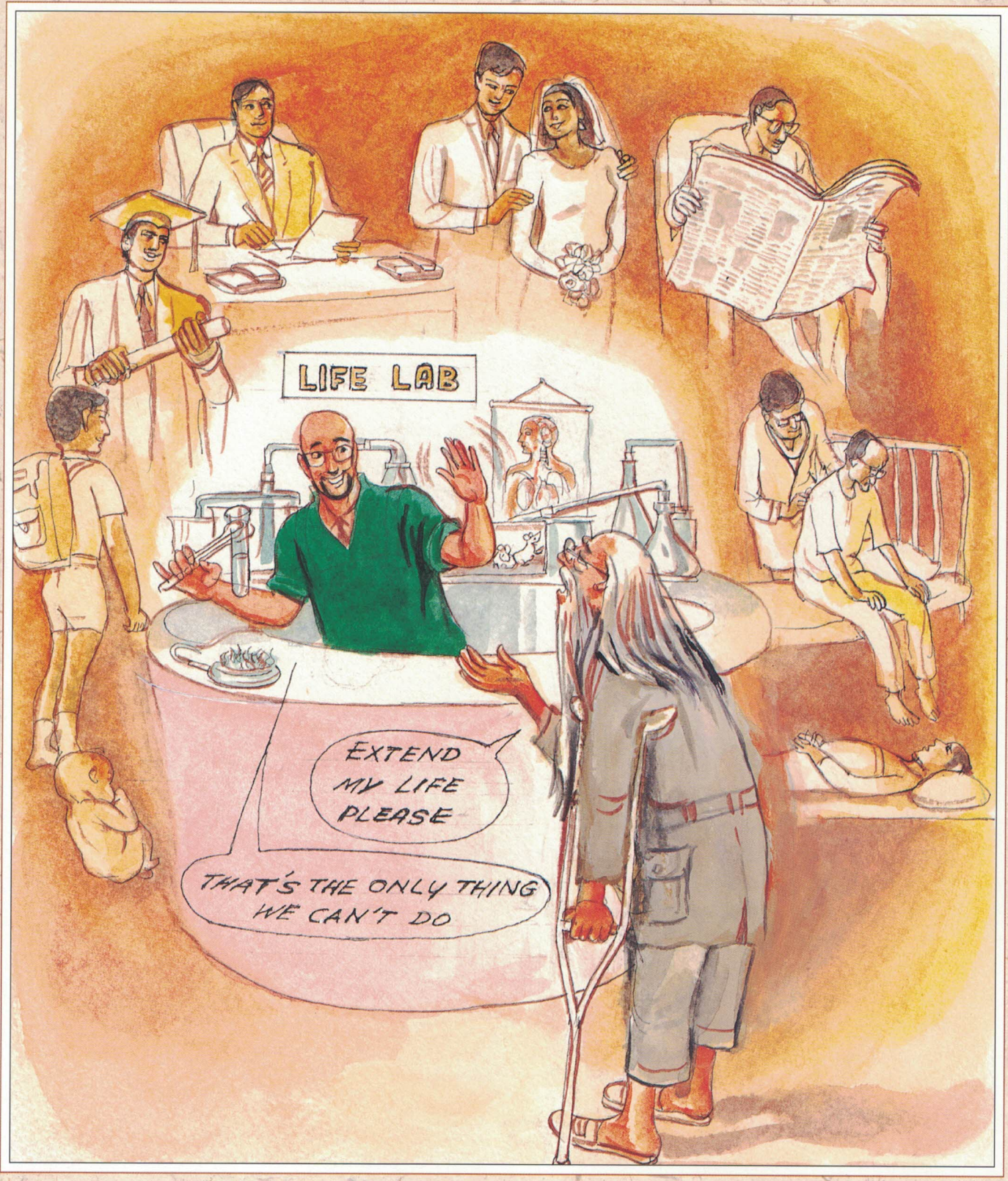
This stanza speaks about the nature of life. Everybody knows that life ends in death. But, there are no signs to show at what time death will come. That is not the only aspect of life and death that troubles beings.

Life is misery - it is perpetually full of suffering. Besides, life is of a brief duration. Even that brief span is fraught with sorrow and suffering. Why is it not possible for beings to understand this real nature of life and death? One could consider the non-indicator aspect of death. If there is a general rule that all people die in their ripe old age, there is no unexpectedness. But, death does not come that way. It may strike at any moment. At the height and prime of one's youth, death may claim a being without any warning whatsoever.

The most harrowing instance of that aspect of death in the twentieth century is the tragic death of Princess Diana. She was in her youth - happy, world-renowned, charming and popular. There was not even a vague sign of death. There was no knowing that sudden death was impending.

Her tragic end proves the truth of the Buddha's Word that life is "**animittaṃ**" - without an indicator - bereft of signs. As there is no sign, no fore-warning, people do not know when to expect death. Over and above all this, life is full of suffering. In addition to the unexpectedness of death, life is full of misery. To worsen this situation, life is short.

The stanza sums up the nature of life to emphasize its tragic aspects. Firstly, life ends mostly without a warning - as death can strike at any moment. Life is full of suffering. In addition to all this, life is short. If these characteristics of life could be fully understood, beings can realize the true nature of the human destiny.



Nahi so upakkamo atthi - Yena jātā na mīyare
Jarampi patvā maraṇaṃ- Evaṃ dhammāhi pāṇino

There is no device by which one who is born, can escape death.
Having attained old age, death is inevitable.

NAHI SO UPAKKAMO ATTHI

"All creatures have to die. Life is but death.
And they shall fare according to their deeds,
Finding the fruit of merit and misdeeds;
Infernal realms because of evil works,
Blissful rebirth for meritorious acts."

Nahi so upakkamo atthi
Yena jātā na mīyare
Jarampi patvā maraṇaṃ
Evaṃ dhammāhi paṇino

yena - through some means
jātā - those beings that are born
na mīyare - do not die
so upakkamo - such a device
nahi atthi - does not exist
jarampi patvā - either reaching old age (or not reaching old age)
maraṇaṃ - death occurs
pāṇinohi - beings
evaṃ dhammā - have this kind of nature

It is good if there is some means by which these beings who are born will remain without dying. But, that kind of device does not exist. The death of beings occurs either when they grow old or even before that. That is the nature of being.

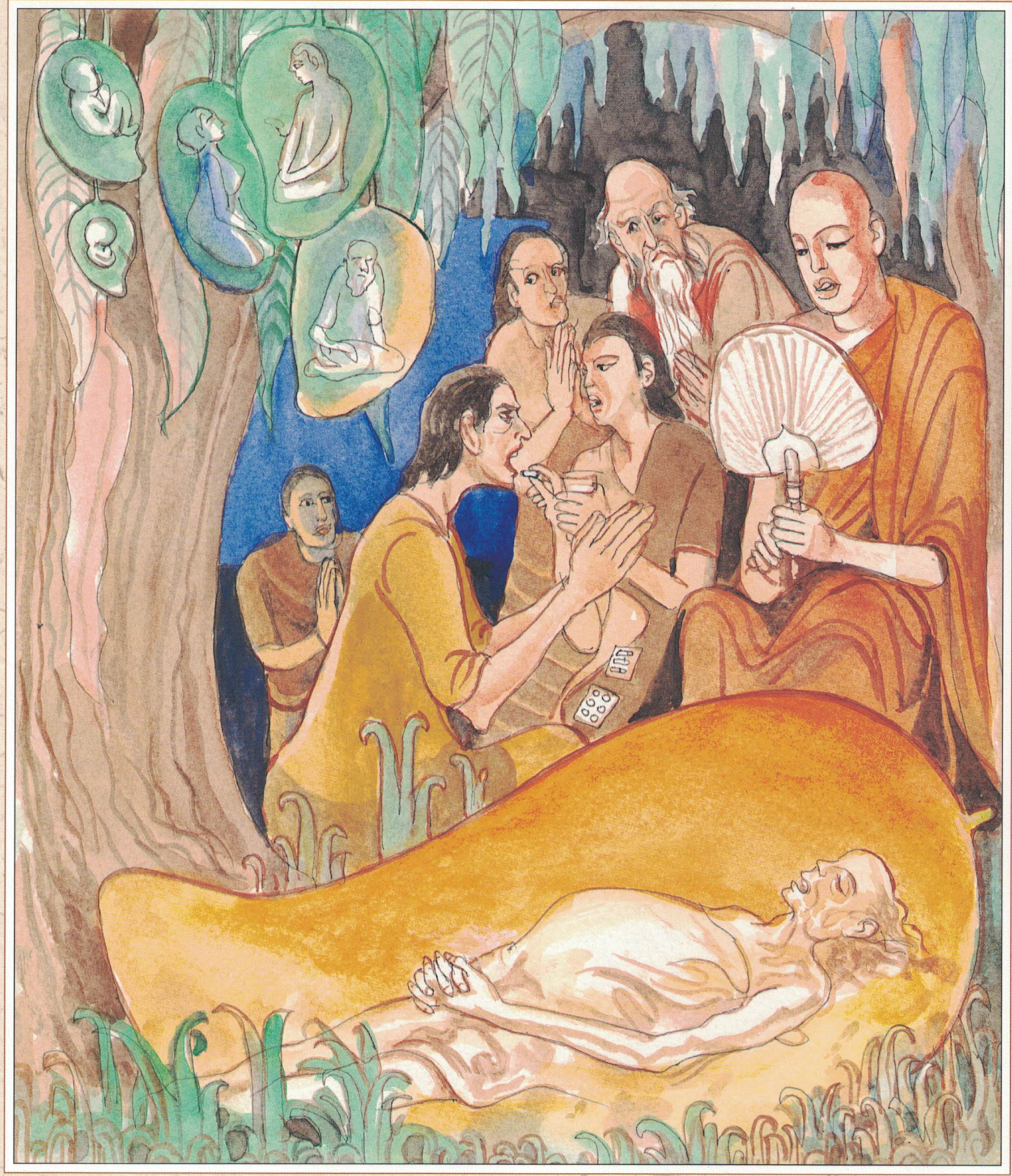
All beings capable of thought, yearn to live forever, or at least, as long as possible. They try all kinds of things to stay alive over a long period of time through medicine, magic mantram etc. But, nothing helps. If there is some method by which people can remain without dying, that will really be the victory all beings are waiting for.

Although the hope is there, such a device as would prevent death has not so far been discovered. Therefore, people will continue to die. There is nothing whatsoever that can be done about it. People die at various stages of their life. Under normal circumstances, beings should die during their old age. But, that cannot be considered the general rule. In consequence, the total preoccupation of the whole of humanity is to find a means by which people can remain alive for a very long time.

This human preoccupation with immortality and the desire to live forever are the outcome of ignorance. The Buddha has indicated the three characteristics of life which never vary. This classification of characteristics of beings is universal - for all time and all places.

The Buddha has described life as having three qualities - **'anicca'**, **'dukkha'** and **'anatta'**. **'Anicca'** implies impermanence. The second characteristic is **'dukkha'** - suffering. And the third characteristic of life '**anatta**' - lack of a separable soul. If this classification is properly understood, no one will yearn to remain without dying because dying cannot be stopped in any way.

What is essential then, is not to waste one's precious life in the futile pursuit of prolonging this life, but to acquire merit through wholesome action, to progress towards the path to Liberation which, in reality, is the only way to prevent dying. Even modern science, has so far failed in its attempts to discover a method to prolong life. In 1997, when a successful cloning of an ewe happened, some thought that through a series of cloning, immortality would be possible. But even this was proven wrong. Therefore the Buddha's characteristic of life as **Anicca**, **Dukkha** and **Anatta** remains unchallenged.



Phalānamiva pakkānaṃ - Pāto patanato bhayaṃ
Evaṃ jātāna maccānaṃ - Niccaṃ maraṇato bhayaṃ

Just as fruits having ripened must fall,
even so mortals who are born must always have the fear of death.

PHALĀNAMI VA PAKKĀNAṂ

"You are like a withering leaf, now. The messengers of Death wait on you.
On this threshold of decay you stand. Provision too there is none for you."

Phalānamiva pakkānaṃ
Pāto patanato bhayaṃ
Evaṃ jātāna maccānaṃ
Niccaṃ maraṇato bhayaṃ

pakkānaṃ phalānaṃ- ripe fruit
pāto - in the morning
patanato - falling down
bhayaṃ iva - fear exists
evaṃ - in the same way
jātānaṃ maccānaṃ - to the beings who are born
niccaṃ - always
maraṇato - of death
bhayaṃ - fear exists

For all those fruits that are ripe, there is the fear of falling down in the morning. In the same way for all human beings who are born, there is always the fear of death.

If fruits are conscious, they will experience a peculiar fear when they are ripe. We know that when a fruit ripens it will soon fall down. This fear is real because in the nature of things, a ripened fruit invariably falls down.

This fear is present even in human beings. All human beings who are born will die one day. Beings feel this fear invariably. This way, human lives are quite close to their death, from the day they are born. They are very much like the fruits in a tree.

The fruits may fall at various stages. It is quite likely that a fruit could fall down when it is quite young and unripe. Some causes induce that untimely fall.

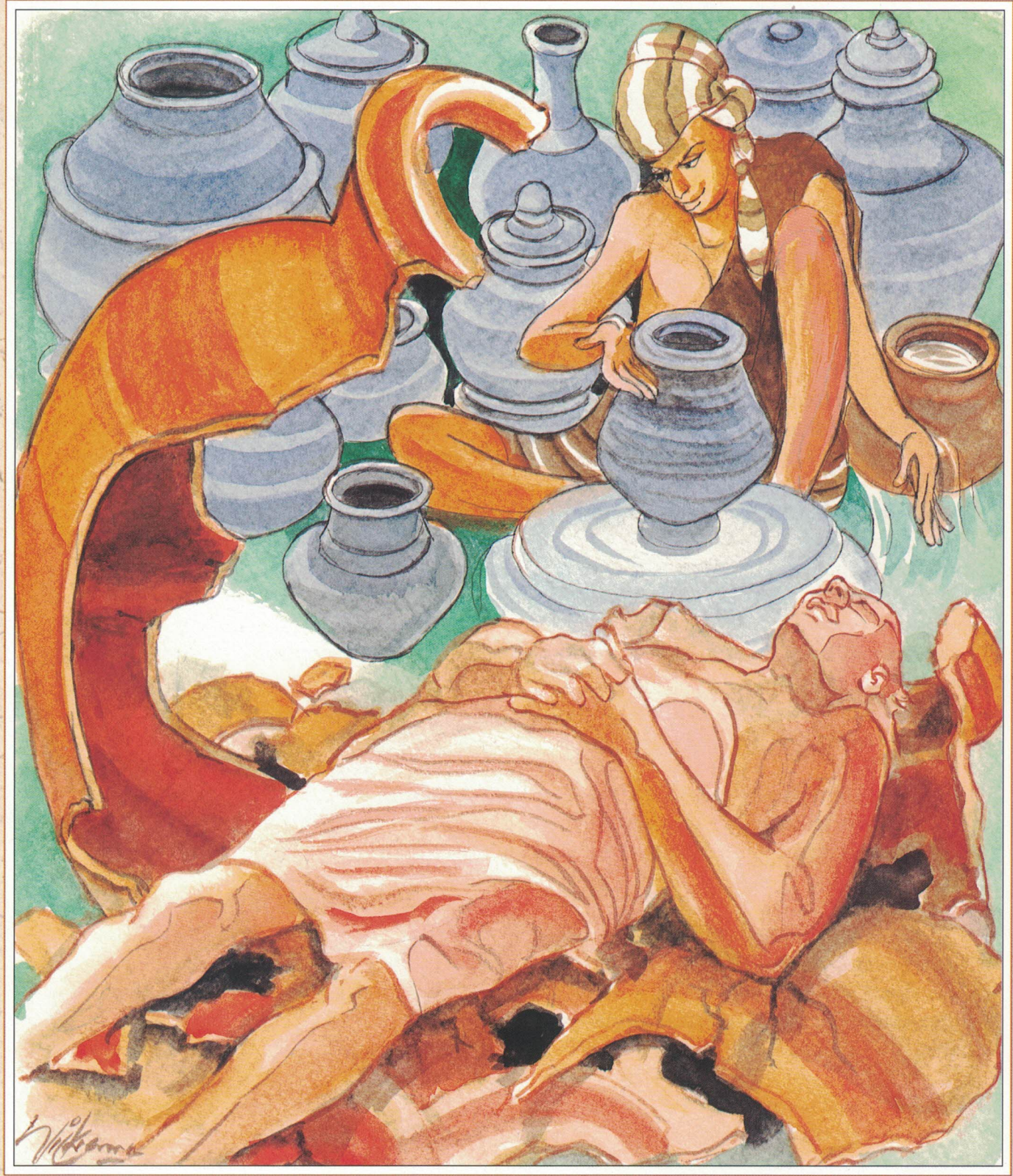
As a general rule fruits fall down when they are quite ripe. There are all kinds of exceptions to this rule. Winds, adverse weather, human action might bring down the fruits while they are still very young.

In the instance of human beings, too, death comes generally in the ripe old age of a person. But, this general rule has all kinds of exceptions. Death is quite likely to come when a child is in its infancy. Some unseen cause may bring about its death. Young people in the prime of their life are quite likely to die suddenly.

This stanza highlights the nature of life. Death is ever present. Life is ephemeral. The only certainty beings have is death. Even about that "certain" death, there are uncertainties. Will beings die young, in their infancy? Or else, will they live to long years and pass away in there ripe old age? No one knows the answers to this kind of question.

To come to terms with these various uncertainties, people must meditate upon the true nature of human existence. When uncertainties prevail, people become helpless. This helplessness creates sorrow and suffering.

To meditate upon these realities the contemplation of the ripened fruits that fall should be extended. One must ask whether it is only the ripened fruit that falls. The inevitable answer to this question is, "No, not only the ripe fruit, but even unripe ones too fall." The image of the falling fruits is a very effective symbol to contemplate on the nature of death.



Yathāpi kumbhakārassa - Katā mattika bhājanā
Sabbe bhedana pariyantā - Evaṃ maccāna jīvitaṃ

Just as earthen-ware vessels of a potter are destined to break,
even so is the life of mortals, destined to fall apart.

YATHĀPI KUMBHAKĀRASSA

" Even ornamental royal chariots wear out. So the body too ages.
But the good Dhamma never ages. Thus do the good reveal it among the good."

Yathāpi kumbhakārassa
Katā mattika bhājanā
Sabbe bhedana pariyantā
Evaṃ maccāna jīvitaṃ

Yathā api - just as much
kumbhakārassa - by a potter
katā - done
mattika bhājanā - clay vessels
sabbe - all
bhedana pariyantā - end by breaking
maccānaṃ - human beings
jīvitaṃ - life
evaṃ - similar

A potter makes vessels out of clay. All those earthern vessels get broken at the end. It is the same thing with human life, too. They all end in disintegration, very much like the earthern-ware pots of the potter.

In the days of the Buddha the potter making earthern-ware pots would have been a very familiar sight. Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, makes an extensive reference to the potter and his assistant in His sermon - "**Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta**" (The Great Discourse on the Foundation of Consciousness).

The practice of making earthern-ware pots seems to have fascinated people at that time. The Buddha, in this stanza, draws a parallel between the potter's creations and the lives of human beings. The potter takes a considerable amount of trouble and makes earthern-ware vessels. Users acquire them. But, invariably, they get broken. The end of the earthern-ware pots is quite similar to that of the human lives.

All human lives end in death. Whatever may be the quality of the person, his life gets disintegrated in death. The pot has no other destiny. It will, in the end, get broken up. Human beings, too, do not have any other destiny. At the end of their lives they have to die.

The only difference between pots and human beings is that human beings can hope to have a next birth, in terms of what **kamma** (action) they committed during this birth. The pots end broken up and return to the earth out of which the original clay was taken. The point made here is that, in terms of inevitable disintegration, pots and human lives share an identical destiny.

The universal disintegration touches everything, every phenomenon. A frequent image of disintegration, in Buddhist libration, is the reference made by the Buddha, to the luxury coaches of kings. They represent the higher in comfort and affluence, but even they get disintegrated eventually.

Daharā ca mahantā ca - Ye balā ye ca paṇḍitā
Sabbe maccu vasaṃ yanti - Sabbe maccu parāyanā

Grown- ups and the young, the wise and
the foolish- all these come under the spectre of death.

DAHARĀ CA MAHANTĀ CA

"Old age and death come rolling over the living, - nobles, brahmins, traders, serfs and outcasts. Nothing can escape, all is crushed. No place for elephants is there - nor for chariots, nor for infantry. Nor can one be victorious in fighting, by means of charms or wealth."

Daharā ca mahantā ca
Ye balā ye ca paṇḍitā
Sabbe maccu vasaṃ yanti
Sabbe maccu parāyanā

daharā ca - infants and children
mahantā ca - adults, the aged
ye bāla - those who are foolish
ye ca paṇḍitā - the learned and the wise, too
sabbe - all these
maccu vasaṃ - under the sway of death
yanti - come
sabbe - all these
maccu parāyanā - are subdued and dominated by **Māra** (Death)

Infants and children, adults and the aged, those who are ignorant, those who are wise and learned, all these come under the sway of Death. All these are under the domination of Death.

To **Māra** (Death) there is no distinction between the young, the old, or the wise and the foolish. What this stanza says is universally true. If the long history of mankind is analysed we see how right this statement is.

Death is not a respecter of age. Death brings within his grasp even the unborn who are yet inside the mother's womb. Those infants who are just born are cruelly snatched away by Death. In the modern world, in such areas as Africa, millions of young children die helplessly each year. Even in some affluent countries the deaths of children are harrowingly told. Lack of proper nourishment deprives masses of children from life. When countries are in the grip of war, or else when countries are in a state of civil strife, most of the victims just happen to be innocent children.

Then come the young men and young women. In today's armies both men and women are enlisted. In combats these young men and young women die, in tens of thousands. As a matter of course, Death claims people who are in their old age. This way, there is no age group that Death does not attack.

Māra (Death) does not respect other distinctions as well. Those who are charming and beautiful are not spared. Nor does **Māra** set free those people who are physically ungainly. There, too, no distinction is made.

There is no intellectual level that **Māra** shows a special respect for. Those who are foolish are not spared by Death, on account of their lack of wisdom. They are snatched readily as and when Death likes. It is the same thing with the wise, the learned.

Throughout human history, men of great intellectual stature and tremendous wisdom have been taken away by Death with not even the slightest regard for their wisdom. The general rule, therefore, is that all beings come under the sway of Death. Consider these lines that indicate how even such a great individual like Ven. **Mahā Moggallāna**, Chief Disciple, was claimed by death:

The second of the Chief Disciples,
The foremost in miraculous powers,
Fell in the dreadful jaws of death;
What can be said of those like me?

Tesaṃ maccu paretānaṃ - Gacchataṃ paralokato
Napitā tāyate puttaṃ - Ñātivā pana ñatake

No father can save his son, and no relative can save his relatives,
when they depart from this world.

TESAṂ MACCU PARETĀNAṂ

Though I should fast and weep, how would it profit me?
My kith and kin, alas! would more unhappy be
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead;
Why should I grieve ? He fares the way he had to tread.

Tesaṃ maccu paretānaṃ
Gacchataṃ paralokato
Napitā tāyate puttaṃ
Ñātivā pana ñātake

maccu paretānaṃ- caught in the grip of Death
gacchataṃ - those who go to the other world (those who die)
tesaṃ - those beings
paralokato - preventing from going to the other world
pitā - father
tāyate - protect, guard, save
puttaṃ - one's own son
na ñāyate - becomes incapable of saving
ñātivā pana - even the relatives
ñātake - one's other relatives cannot protect

When people are claimed by Death - when **Māra** clutches them there is no one who can save them. No one is capable of preventing such beings from going to the other world. No father can save his son from Death. No relative can protect a relative from dying and crossing over to the other world.

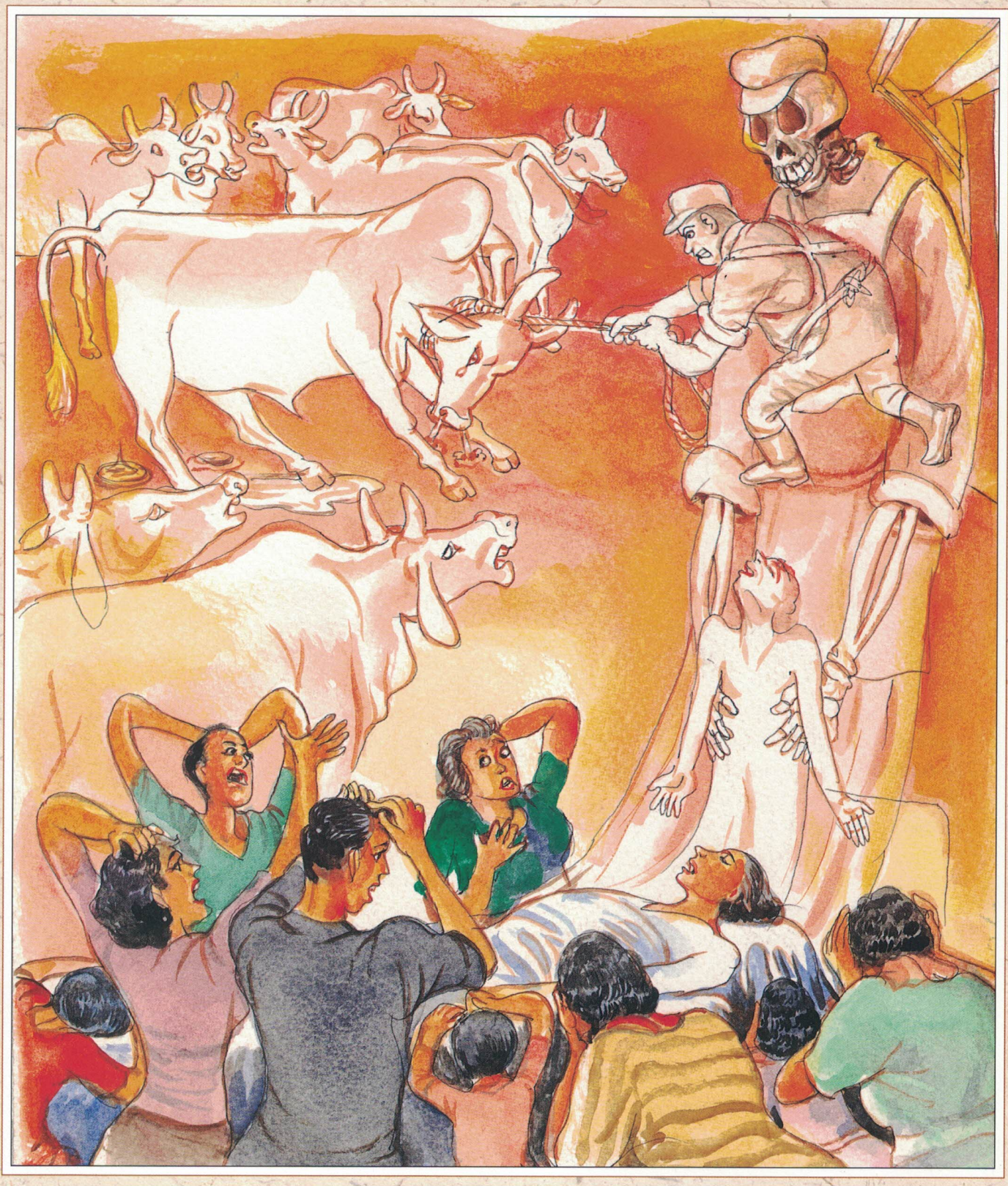
All beings are caught by Death. There is no one who can escape Death's grip. But the greater tragedy of Death is that no one can protect a person from being taken away by **Māra**. Even those who hold the dying person in the greatest affection cannot save the dying person. Those who are being taken to the other world by Death can in no way be saved. Take for instance a son who is held in the greatest affection by the father. When that son is claimed by **Māra** (Death), the beloved father is totally helpless. Do what he may, he cannot save his dying son. It is the same with other relatives. No relative can save their relatives from Death, however much they tried.

The purpose of this stanza is to stress the relentlessness of Death. In the modern world, advanced forms of therapy are available to the affluent, especially. But, even those people cannot prevent someone near and dear to them from dying.

Infants die due to unavoidable causes, right in front of their loving parents. But, the parents are helpless. It is the same with other relatives. They try to prevent the death of their relatives, But, they cannot snatch back the relatives from the relentless clutch of **Māra**.

The incapacity of the living to snatch their loved ones from the clutch of **Māra** (Death) has been quite graphically described in a Sri Lankan classic. The description goes this way: Taking hold of a body that is without essence, one determinedly puts on variegated shows.

Even if one were to spend one's life together with one's spouse, relishing the enjoyments, when the dreadful **Māra** approaches you in order to lead you away, there is no bailing out. It is good to have performed some merit. No one has so far been able to devise an effective strategy to 'deceive' death, and get back those who have been claimed by death. Even such startling discoveries of science as 'cloning' do not in any way form a solution to meet the threat of death.



Pekkhataṃ yeva ñātīnaṃ - Passalāla panaṃ puthu
Eka-mekova maccānaṃ - Govajjho viya nīyati

While relatives stand watching and lamenting,
see how beings are led to death, like cattle to a slaughter house.

PEKKHATAṂ YEVA ÑĀTĪNAṂ

"As children cry in vain to grasp the moon above,
So mortals idly mourn the loss of those they love.
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread."

Uraga Jātaka

Pekkhataṃ yeva ñātīnaṃ
Passalāla panaṃ puthu
Eka-mekova maccānaṃ
Govajjho viya nīyati

ñātīnaṃ- the relatives of the deceased
pekkhataṃ eva - while looking on
puthu - many
lāla panaṃ - lamenting, mourning
maccānaṃ - beings
ekaṃ eko eva - one by one
govajjho viya - like butcher leading cattle to the a slaughter house (abbatoir)
nīyati - taken away
passa - consider

Death leads away human beings one by one to death, like a butcher taking cattle one by one to the slaughter house. While the helpless relatives look on and some lament, they are taken away.

Everywhere death takes place. All beings are aware that death occurs. But, there is no one who can prevent it. The situation is similar to cattle being killed by the butcher in a slaughter house.

The butcher leads away the cattle to the abbatoir. Everybody sees it. In the same way beings die, taken away, one by one, by **Māra**. Relatives look on when this is happening. There is nothing they can do about it. Some lament, some weep, wail and mourn. But Death, like a butcher, keeps on leading the people to the abbatoir. This stanza emphasizes the helplessness of beings in the presence of Death. Death does its killing in whatever way he pleases. Other beings can do nothing about it. The only thing they are capable of is looking on, helplessly. Weeping, wailing, lamenting wouldn't help. This stanza, too, stresses the utter helplessness of beings in the presence of death. What is the solution for this situation? The only reaction possible is to understand the real nature of life and death, with wisdom.

The path to such wise contemplation is given by the Buddha - the Supremely Enlightened One. The essential detachment that enables wise persons to respond to death with equanimity comes only from the Teachings of the Buddha.

In the Buddhist system, quite importantly, the nature of reality is emphasized. When the reality of Death is contemplated, it will be possible for a meditator to obtain the proper perspective on Death and reflection on Death.

Everybody is helpless in the presence of death. At the Demise of the Enlightened One, even the monks, who had known the Buddhist doctrine, for sometime at least, became inconsolable. Though people learn that **Māra,** the butcher, will invariably lead them to the abattoir , only a handful strive to come to terms with it.

It often happens in human communities that people become wary, if some robbery were to take place in one's neighborhood. When, a house in the neighborhood is broken into, others in that area keep a vigil,and take precautions. But, although people endlessly see other people dying, they do not keep such a vigil to protect themselves against death's menace.

Evaṃabbhāhato loko - Maccunā ca jarāya ca
Tasmā dhīrā na socanti - Viditvā loka pariyāyaṃ

Since beings are thus assailed by death and old age,
the wise knowing the nature of this world, do not grieve.

EVAṂABBHĀHATO LOKO

"Man quits his mortal frame, when joy in life is past,
E'en as a snake is wont, its worn out slough to cast;
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead;
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread."

Evaṃabbhāhato loko
Maccunā ca jarāya ca
Tasmā dhīrā na socanti
Viditvā loka pariyāyaṃ

loko- people in the world
evaṃ - this way
maccunā ca - by death
jarāyaca - by decay and old age
abbhāhato - are oppressed
tasmā - therefore
dhirā - the wise
loka pariyāyaṃ - the true nature of the world
viditvā - having understood
na socanti - do not lament

It is the nature of the world for the worldlings to be oppressed by decay and old age, and by death. Therefore, wise ones understand the nature of the world for what it is, and do not lament, wail or weep.

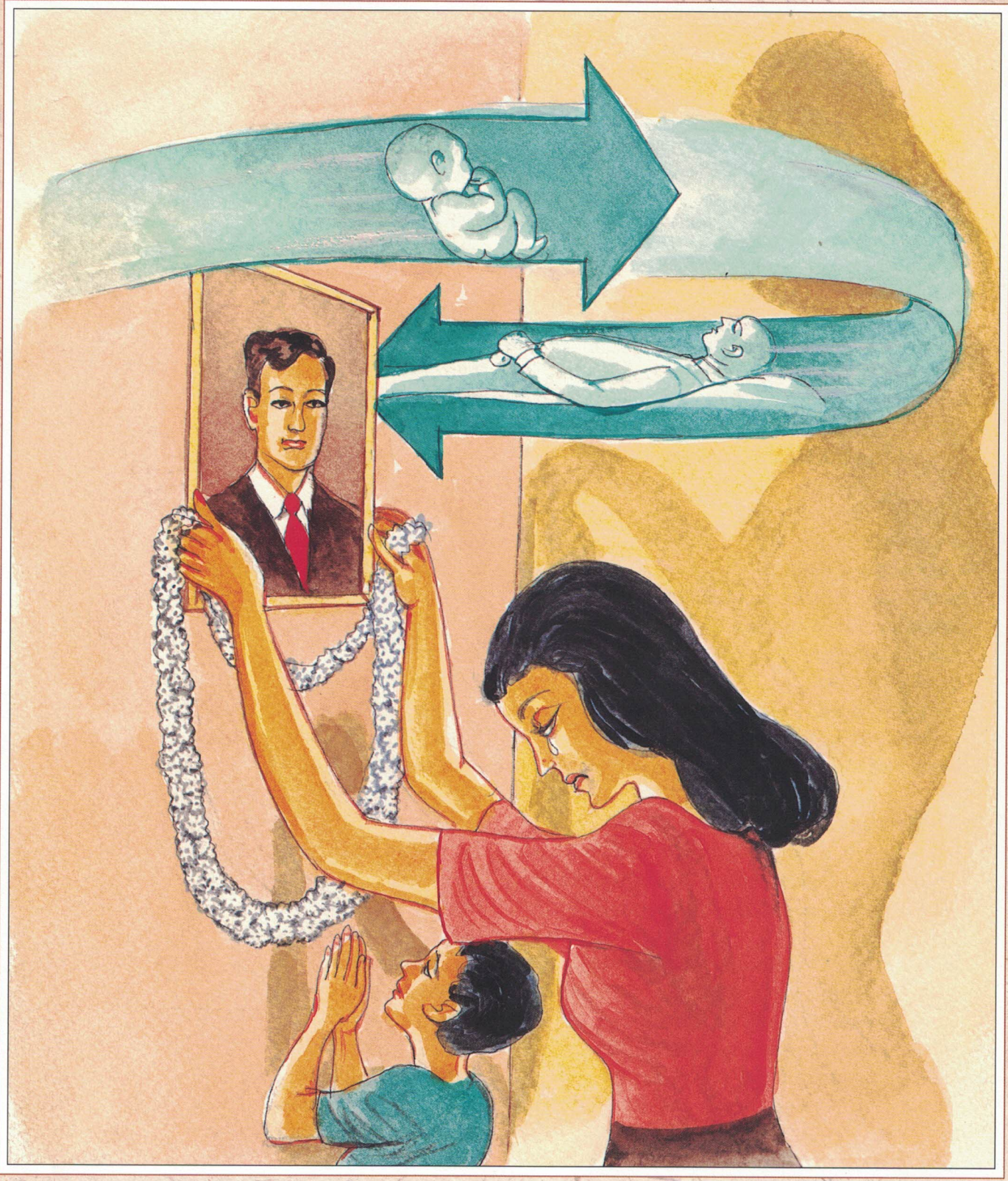
Decay and death have existed in the world for vast ages. But, beings have not been able to come to terms with these. Therefore, death, decay and old age continue to oppress worldlings. To get over the domination of these, people wail, weep and lament. But, that does not give any real relief. Only the wise ones will be able to come to terms with these phenomena.

That is because they are capable of understanding the true nature of the world, as it exactly is. They do not, therefore, wail, lament or weep in the presence of decay, old age and death. They do not see any reason to lament. Wise persons are those who have been able to contemplate on the nature of the world for what it really is. The wise can contemplate upon the nature of the world by practising "**kāyānupassanā**" (the Contemplation on the Body).

At all events, death is inevitable because this body is subject to all the causes of death such as the many hundreds of diseases, as well as other external dangers.

At any moment these may beset the body and cause it to perish. In this connection the Buddha said: "Here, O monks, when the day is gone and the night has fallen, a monk, reflects thus: ' Many are the (possible) causes of my death: a snake may bite me, a scorpion may bite me, a centipede may bite me, and in consequence death may come to me; thus danger may befall me; or I may trip and fall, the food I have taken may upset me, or the bile, or the phlegm of my body may cause me trouble, or the sharp currents of bodily air may trouble me, and in consequence I may die or encounter danger."

Thus death should be recollected by way of the body and its liability to many dangers. This constant meditation upon death, enables the seeker after truth to adopt a dispassionate attitude towards life. Once this attitude to death is adopted, reality can be seen, without one's mind being clouded by extreme emotions. This stanza explains that the cause of sorrow is the inability to see the true nature of the world. Coming to proper terms with the real nature of life needs wisdom. This wisdom too is the kind that enables right vision unclouded by emotion.



Yassa maggaṃ na jānāsi - Āgatassa gatassa vā
Ubho ante asampassaṃ - Niratthaṃ paridevasi

It is in vain that you lament over the dead, since you do not know whence they come nor whither they go.

YASSA MAGGAṂ NA JĀNĀSI

**" Uncalled he hither came, unbidden soon to go;
E'en as he came, he went. What cause is here for woe?
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead;
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread."**

**Yassa maggaṃ na jānāsi
Āgatassa gatassa vā
Ubho ante asampassaṃ
Niratthaṃ paridevasi**

āgatassa vā - of the conception in mother's womb, which is the arrival into this world
gatassa vā - of dying and going out of this world
yassa - about a given individual
maggaṃ - the path either of his coming into this world or going out of this life
na jānāsi - you would not know
ubho ante - these two matters - from where did you come and when do you go
asampassaṃ - not being able to see
niratthaṃ - in a useless manner
paridevasi - you lament

When beings come into this world no one can know the path they took to come into this world for that arrival. When beings leave this world too, we do not know the path they take. As beings are incapable of knowing these two things, that is, where they came from, and where they are going, they lament over the dead.

All beings who are born in this world come from a mother's womb. Everybody knows this. What is baffling is from where do they come and get conceived in the womb. Is there any indication that will establish the place from where a given being comes and gets conceived in a mother's womb?

The same kind of situation prevails when an individual leaves this world. There is no knowing where that individual went. No one can know where he or she went after leaving this life.

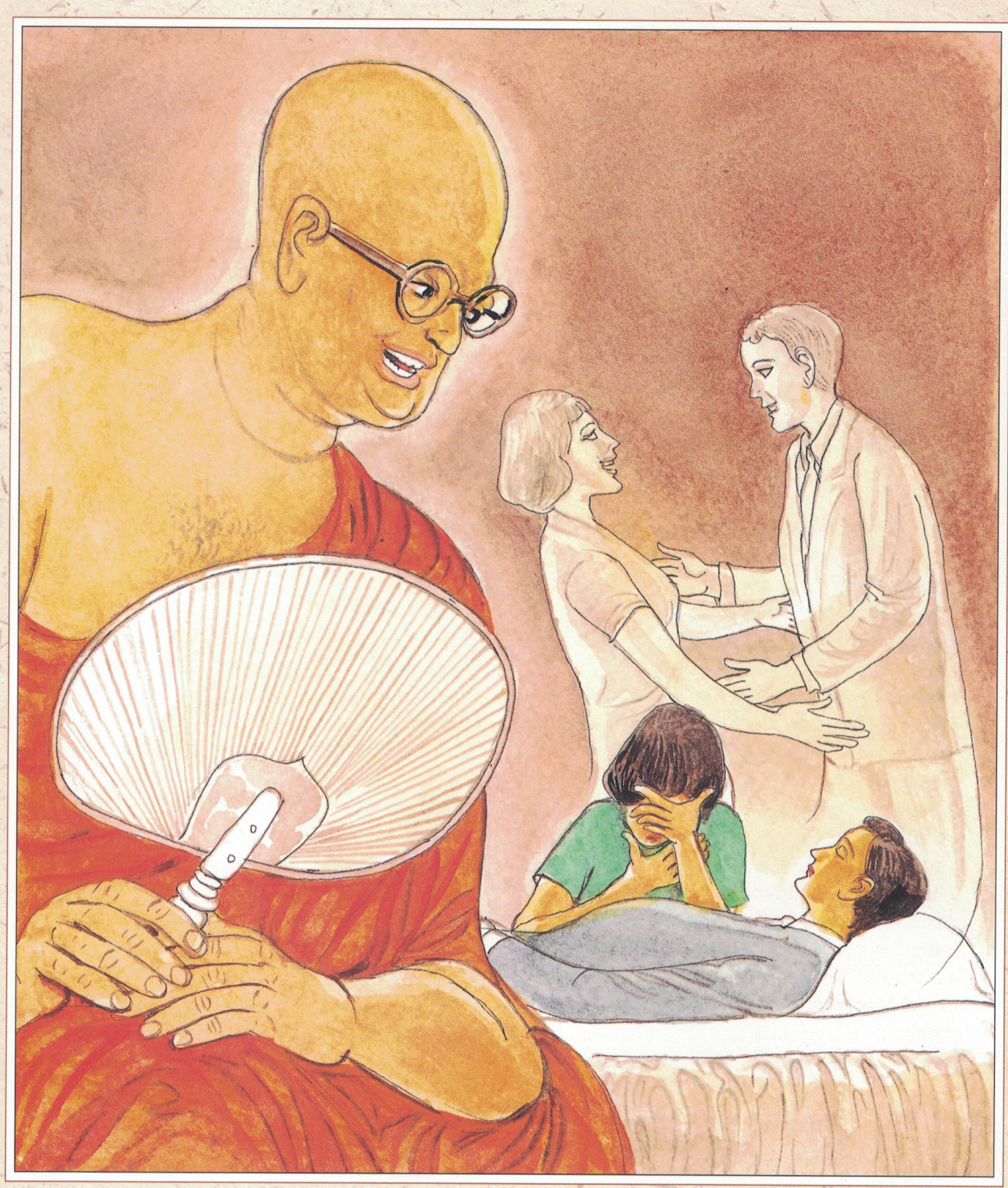
In the modern world of advanced technology there is no arrangement by which we could establish from where a person arrived to be conceived in a mother's womb.

Although some mystics tend to believe that they can trace the passage of a person leaving life, it is not known for certain whether anyone could state exactly where such a person would arrive at. Therefore, we are not certain how one could trace the path taken into this world by those who are born and also the path taken by those who leave this world.

People lament because of this. They do not know where the departed person went. No trace of his path out of this world is seen anywhere.

The new-born child is a total new-comer, people are uncertain about the place he came from.

In a way, there is no reason for lamenting. When beings arrive in this world they do not keep us informed about their arrival. We do not invite them. When they depart too, we do not ask them to go. They leave the world without our request to leave. That is the exact nature of the world.



Paridevaya māno ce - Kañcidatthaṃ udabbahe
Sammūlho hiṃsa mattānaṃ - Kayirā cetaṃ vicakkhano

If wailing will heal the mourner's shafts of sorrow,
only then let the wise wail.

PARIDEVAYA MĀNO CE

" Who is the greater fool the person who weeps for what cannot be seen (the dead youth) or the person who cries for what can be seen (sun and moon)."

Maṭṭakundali Story

Paridevaya māno ce
Kañcidatthaṃ udabbahe
Sammūlho hiṃsamattānaṃ
Kayirā cetaṃ vicakkhano

ce - if for some reason
sammūlho - someone who is distracted
attānaṃ - one's own self
hiṃsaṃ - torturing
paridevayamāno - lamenting
kañci atthaṃ - some profit
udabbahe - if generated
vicakkhano ca - the wise
etaṃ - this lamentation
kayirā - should be done

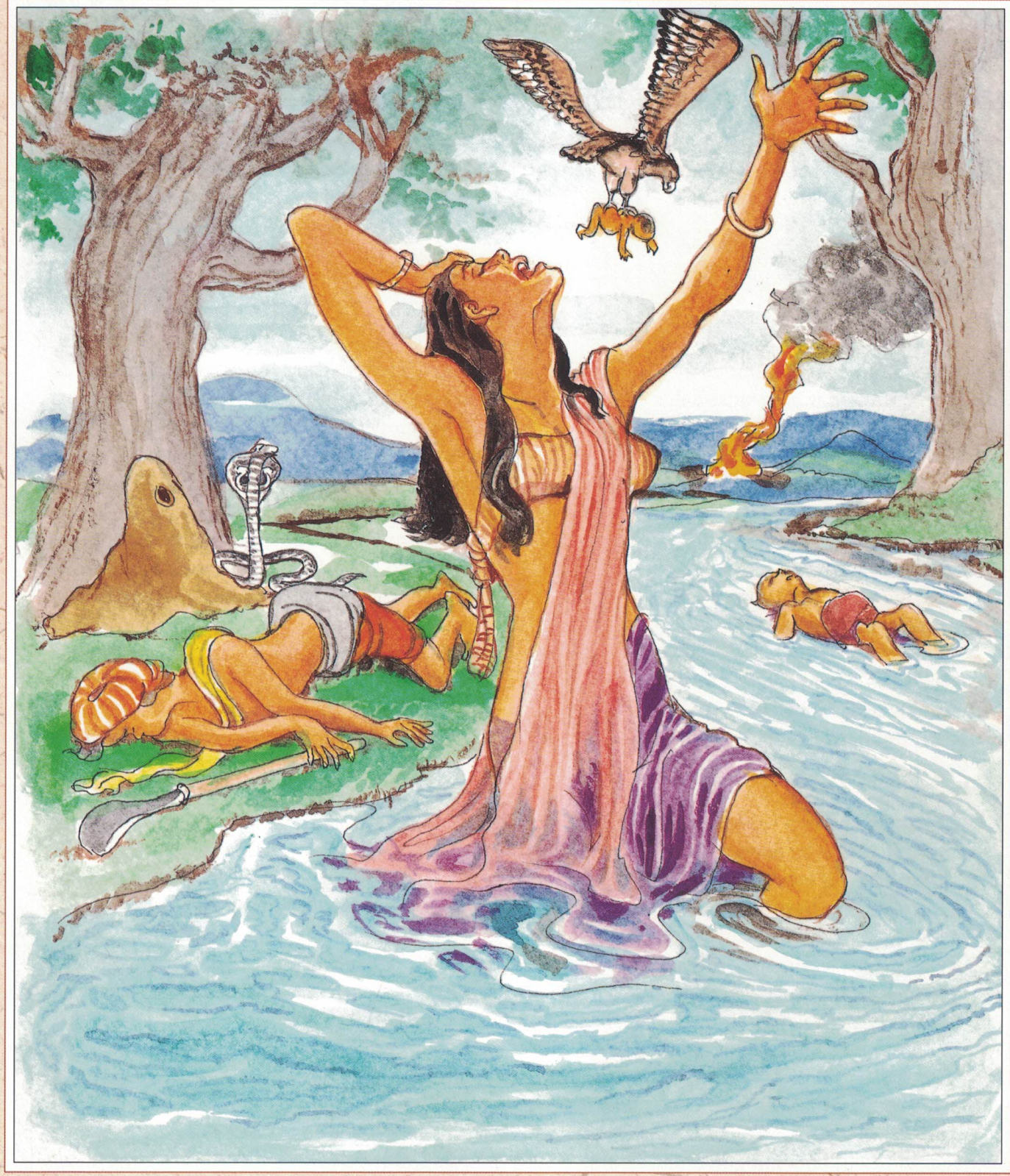
If by lamenting over the death of a person there is a profit that can be earned, even a wise person should do it. It is the nature of the average human being to lament over the death of those who are close to one. They lament, weep and wail because a relation or friend has passed away. Some people keep on lamenting for days and weeks. When they weep and wail continuously they hurt themselves. This process of lamentation weakens them. They become incapable of activity when they go on and on lamenting. This does not produce any profit.

The futility of lamenting over the dead is quite effectively illustrated by the story of **Maṭṭakuṇḍali.** When the Buddha was residing at **Sāvatthi**, there lived in that city a Brahmin named '**Adinnapubbaka**' the one who never gave. He was miserly. He had a son by the name of **Maṭṭakuṇḍalī** . Though the old Brahmin doted upon his son, he remained miserly towards him. The young son fell seriously ill. But the old Brahmin failed to give him proper medical care because he wanted to save on the fees that had to be paid for the physicians.

Maṭṭakuṇḍalī passed away as he did not get proper medical attention. But, just before he died he saw the Buddha briefly, and reposed faith in him. Because of this virtuous act, he was born in heaven after his death. As for the old Brahmin he was sorely aggrieved at the death of his son. After cremating his dead son's body, he kept on lamenting for days. His son who was born in heaven, saw his father's behaviour and appeared at a place close to where he was wailing and he, too, started crying. The Brahmin saw him and thought: "As for me I weep for my dead son. But I wonder why this young fellow is crying."

He asked the youth why he was crying. "As for me, I weep for my dead son. But what makes you cry?" The youth said, "I have a chariot-body, of solid gold. I need a pair of wheels for it." The Brahmin said: "Don't cry for that. I will get you the wheels, either in gold or in some material more precious." **Maṭṭakuṇḍali** said, " But I want the sun and the moon as wheels." Said the Brahmin: "Young man, you are foolish to cry for such things that you cannot obtain."

The young man said: **"You are the greater fool, because you cry for your dead son you cannot see. I cry for things that I can see."** This story highlights the futility of lamenting for the dead.



Nahi ruṇṇena sokena - Santiṃ pappoti cetaso
Bhiyyussuppajjate dukkhaṃ - Sarīraṃ cupa haññati

Peace of mind is not attained by wailing.
It only brings grief and hurts the body.

NAHI RUṆṆENA SOKENA

"Undetermined, unknown is the life of mortals in this world; Hard and brief, and teeming with pain. For there is no means by which those born do not die; Though they attain old age, death comes; Of such a nature are living beings."

Nahi ruṇṇena sokena
Santiṃ pappoti cetaso
Bhiyyussuppajjate dukkhaṃ
Sarīraṃ cupahaññati

ruṇṇena - either by weeping
sokena - or else by lamenting over the dead
cetaso santiṃ - peace of mind
na hi pappoti - will not be reached
assa - to him who laments and weeps
bhiyyo - more and more
dukkhaṃ uppajjate - sorrow will occur
sarīrañca - his body too
upahaññati - will get badly affected

No one can achieve peace of mind through wailing and lamenting. Those who weep and lament will have to face greater and greater sorrow. Not only his mind, but his body too, will get affected.

When people pass away, their friends and relatives weep and wail. Their minds are disturbed. They have no tranquility of the mind. They cannot concentrate on their activities. They get so thoroughly distracted that they cannot get things done. For some time, they spend their days wailing, weeping and lamenting. Whenever they remember the departed person, each moment they recall the good things done by those who have passed away, they get prodded into weeping. But, does this kind of weeping and wailing help? Not at all.

All these matters point to one central question: Do all these things help, one way or another? Not at all. The main moral issue involved here is about the understanding of the reality of life. If people can truly realize what life is like, there will be no need for lamentation. Life is 'signless', for it cannot be determined or reduced to rule, as 'One shall live so long no more, no less.' Life may fail at any point: during the first embryonic stage, or the second, or the third, and so on ; or in the first month, the second, third, or later; or at the time of birth, or else at any time within or beyond a hundred years.

Sickness also cannot be determined, as "Of this sickness beings die, not of another." For they die of any kind of illness or disease. The time of death is also unknown since it cannot be determined, as "One shall die at this time (day or night), not at any other." Beings die in the morning, noon, evening, or at night. The place where the body should lie is also unknown since it cannot be determined as "Here shall the body of the dying be laid, not eleswhere." Destiny is also unknown since it cannot be determined as "One who passes away from the deva world is born among men; passing away from the human world they are born in the deva or other worlds."

Thus, death should be recollected by considering that these five thing are uncertain. The life of human beings is short; he who is long lived, lives only a hundred years or little more. Hence, the Buddha said: **"Brief, O Monks, is the life of human beings soon passing away. Good deeds are to be done, and the religious life should be lived by him who is born, there is no escape from death even if he may live a hundred years, or a little longer."**

Kiso vivaṇṇo bhavati - Himsa mattānamattanā
Na tena petā pālenti - Niratthā paridevanā

Mourning only makes the mourner emaciated and pale.
It does not help the departed. Therefore, mourning is meaningless.

KISO VIVAṆṆO BHAVATI

"Even if you cried and were intensely moved, the dead cannot be seen again. Why don't you make up your mind and acquire merit?"

Lōvaḍa Sagarāva (The Book of Wordly Welfare)

Kiso vivaṇṇo bhavati
Hiṃsa mattānamattanā
Na tena petā pālenti
Niratthā paridevanā

attanā - by one's own self
attānaṃ - one's own self
hiṃsaṃ - torturing
kiso - emaciation
vivaṇṇo - getting pale
bhavati - happens
tena - due to that wailing and lamentation
petā - the deceased persons
na pālenti - do not get protected
paridevanā - lamentation
niratthā - is of no use

When an individual goes on weeping, lamenting and wailing, he inflicts pain on himself. His body begins to get emaciated. He gets discoloured. Do all these lamentations protect the person who has passed away? Not at all. Considered this way, weeping and lamentation are purposeless. Those who suffer bereavement wail, weep and lament at their loss. Through this process they inflict pain upon themselves. With the self-torture, those who lament get emaciated. They become pale and discoloured in complexion.

A central question is asked in this stanza. Does this lamentation help the departed persons? As a result of the wailing and weeping, does the departed person gain anything? The emphatic answer to these questions is that all these lamentations are not at all of any use to the departed. In such a context what has to be done is to come to terms with human nature and the reality of life. Instead of wasting time and suffering, the mourners, with a sober understanding of what one may have lost, could turn to the acquisition of merit. This merit could be quietly transferred to those departed friends or relatives. This way both the departed and the living acquire a profit and a wholesome spiritual result.

Immediately after the passing away of the Supremely Enlightened One, even some monks started wailing. The great Arahants of that day pointed out the futility of weeping over the Passing Away of the Enlightened One. This episode is recorded in **Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta**. Venerable Ananda uttered this verse: "Terrible was the quaking; men's hair stood on end when the All-Accomplished Buddha passed away."

And those monks who had not yet overcome their passions wept and tore their hair, raising their arms, throwing themselves down and twisting and turning, crying: "All too soon the Blessed Buddha has passed away. All too soon the Way Farer has passed away. All too soon the Eye of the World has disappeared!" But, those monks who were free from craving endured mindfully saying: "All compounded things are impermanent - What is the use of this?" Then the Venerable Anuruddha said: **"Friends, enough of your weeping and wailing! Has not the Lord already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and to becoming other? So why all this, friends? Whatever is born, whatever becomes compounded, is subject to decay; it cannot be that it does not decay."**

Sokamappajahaṃ jantuṃ - Bhiyyo dukkhaṃ nigacchati
Anutthunanto kālakataṃ - Sokassa vasamanvagu

By not forsaking sorrow, he proceeds to greater pain.
He only goes deeper into the realm of sorrow.

SOKAMAPPAJAHAṂ JANTUṂ

"Why do you remain without acquirng merit, placing your confidence in the Buddha's Refuge? Are you waiting for Yama (Death) to come and take you away? Think, isn't it good to acquire merit by giving alms and committing righteous deeds? Relatives, how foolish is it to cry? Do you cry to make the dead stay back?"

Sokamappajahaṃ jantuṃ
Bhiyyo dukkhaṃ nigacchati
Anutthunanto kālakataṃ
Sokassa vasamanvagu

sokaṃ - weeping and lamenting
appajahaṃ - who does not give up
jantu - person
bhiyyo - more and more
dukkhaṃ nigacchati - becomes engulfed in sorrow
kālakataṃ - for the departed
anutthunanto - over and over again
sokassa vasaṃ - grip
anvagu - has gone

There are those who continue to lament over their loss. This action of theirs does not diminish sorrow; instead it keeps on increasing. The individual who continues in his or her sorrow will come under the sway of sorrow.

Human reaction to bereavement has many facets. There are some individuals who continue to lament over their loss for a long period of time. This is because they cannot come to terms with the departing of their kindred and those close to them.

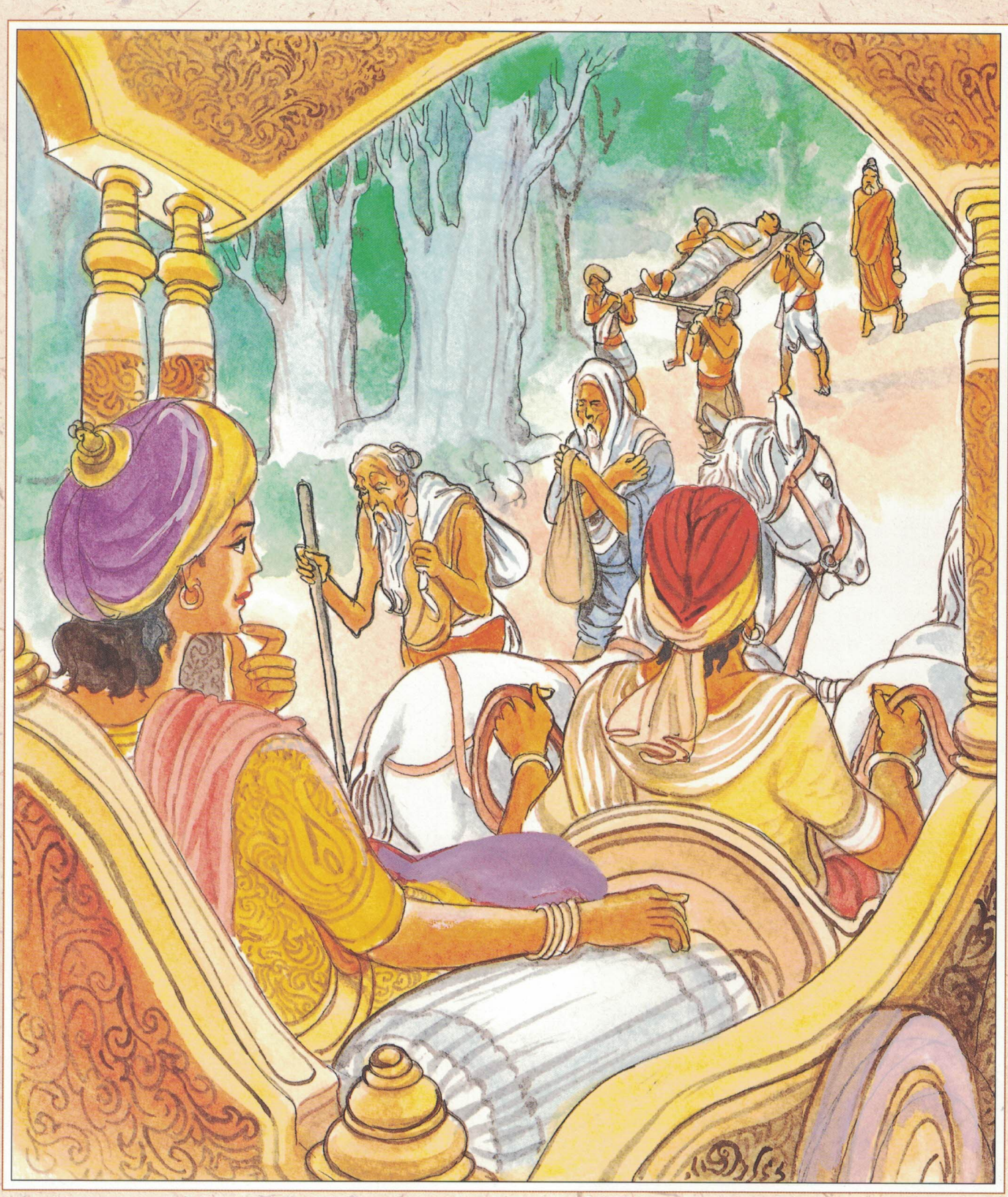
They keep on thinking about those who passed away. Each time they think about those who are no more, their sorrow keeps on increasing. It is clear from this that, when a person mourns the death of someone, instead of his sorrow diminishing, his sense of grief grows. What is the outcome of this process? He who weeps comes under the domination of sorrow. When he is under the sway of sorrow in this manner, all his activities get snarled up. His normal day-to-day routines get seriously disrupted.

Does this help the deceased person in any way? Not at all. The relative or the friend who passed away would not want that to happen to their living friends or relatives. This provides a very sobering form of guidance to people.

It is human, of course, to feel a deep sense of sorrow at the passing away of those who are close to one. But, because of that sorrow one must not pave the way for further disturbances to your life. Therefore, discipline yourself to understand the real nature of life. This implies an understanding of the real nature of death, too.

Be wise and give thought to this matter. Do not allow a sense of sorrow to negate all the things that have been achieved by you. Adopt a rational, realistic and spiritual attitude to life and death. This, in other words, is the understanding of the Word of the Buddha.

The Buddha has steadily taught the world the real nature of life, existence and death of beings. Those who are sorrowing must always keep the Teaching of the Buddha in mind.



Aññepi passa gāmino - Yathā kammūpage nare
Maccuno vasamāgamma - Phandante vidha pāṇino

Observe how others born in this world according
to their Kamma, must tremble under the spectre of death.

AÑÑEPI PASSA GĀMINO

"Life, personality, pleasure and pain. These are but one thought-moment. Thus, suddenly it passes away."

Visuddhi Magga

Aññepi passa gāmino
Yathā kammūpage nare
Maccuno vasamāgamma
Phandante vidha pāṇino

gāmino - those who are getting ready to depart
yathā kammūpage - those who pass away as dictated by **Kamma**
maccuno- of **Māra**
vasaṃ āgamma - having come under the influence
idha - in this world
phandante - tremble
pāṇino - beings
aññe api nare - and other humans
passa - witness

Consider those beings and humans, too, who have come under the spell of **Māra** (Death). Menaced by Death, they tremble in this life. They die as destined.

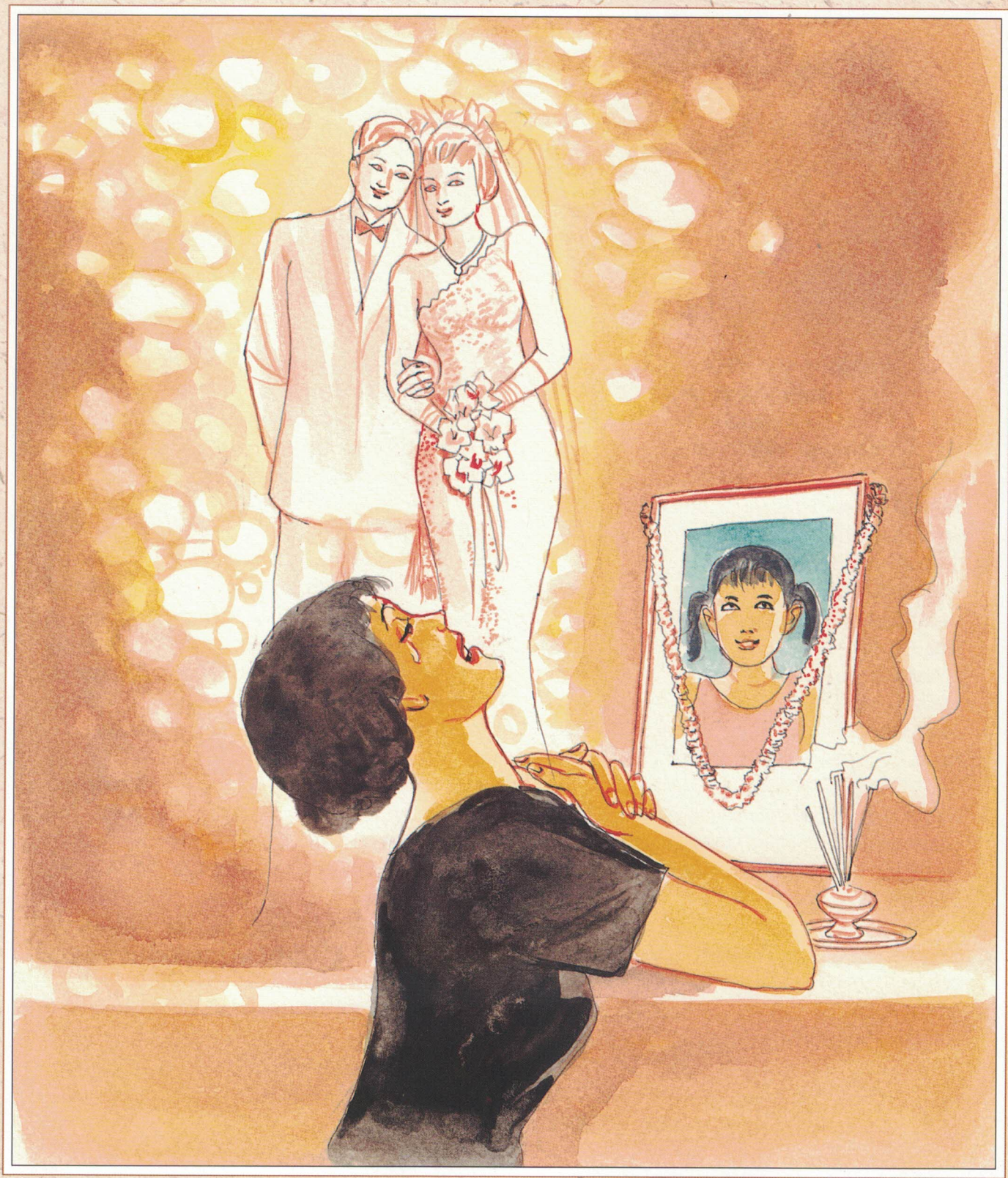
Consider the destiny of men, women and other beings of this world. According to their **kamma** they will all die. This makes them tremble. This common fate of beings troubled Prince **Siddhārta**.

As He was not prepared to accept this human condition without questioning it, Prince **Siddhārta** asked questions about this seemingly inevitable condition. He was moved to question about the fate of beings. The Prince's childhood was lived in an atmosphere of high protection. In consequence the lives of ordinary human beings was a tremendous shock to Him. On His pleasure drives He witnessed on four separate occasions, an old person, a sick person, a dead body, and an ascetic. He was disturbed to the depth of his being. He was determined to save humanity from the clutches of **Māra** (Death). The Buddha's Teaching aims at guiding humanity out of the grasp of all-consuming Death. To free mankind from the clutches of **Māra,** beings should practise the reflection on Death.

Although among present-day Buddhists it is popularly termed **Maraṇānussati** or **Maraṇānusmīti bhāvanā**, it occurs in the Scriptures with the title **Maraṇa sati**, and is explained under that name in the **Visuddimagga**. Therein, **maraṇa** (death) is defined as **jīvitindriya upaccheda,** the cutting off of the life-faculty of one form of existence (**ekabhava-pariyāpaṇṇa**).

Therefore the word is not intended here to denote any of the following three types of death: (1) complete cessation of life (**samuccheda maraṇa**), i.e., the final death of the Arahats, which is the cessation in the world of change; (2) momentary dying (**khaṇika- maraṇa**), i.e., the momentary breaking up of the mental and physical processes (**saṇkhārānaṃ khaṇabhaṇga saṇkhātaṃ**); and (3) that which is known as **sammuti-maraṇa,** i.e., the death of inanimate objects, an expression which is commonly used in speaking of a dead tree, dead metal and so on.

The death that is intended here is two-fold: timely death (**kālamaraṇa**) and untimely death (**akālamaraṇa**). The former, timely death, is threefold: that which comes through the extinction of merit (**puññakkhaya**), that is the termination of the power of the previous **kamma**; that which comes through the extinction of the term of life (**āyukkhaya**); and that which comes through the extinction of both **kamma** and the term of life.



Yena yenahi maññanti - Tato taṃ hoti aññathā
Etādiso vinā bhāvo - Passa lokassa pariyāyaṃ

In whichever manner people think of things,
things turn out to be otherwise. Such is the opposite nature of things.
Observe thus the nature of the world.

YENA YENAHI MAÑÑANTI

"Jātipi dukkhā, jarāpi dukkhā, viyādhipi dukkho, maraṇampi dukkhaṃ, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, PIYEHI VIPPAYOGO DUKKHO, yampicaam, nalabhati tampi dukkho, sankhittena pancūpadānakkhandā dukkhā."

"Separation from loved ones is suffering."

Yena yenahi maññanti
Tato taṃ hoti aññathā
Etādiso vinā bhāvo
Passa lokassa pariyāyaṃ

yena yena hi - in a variety of ways
maññanti - may we think
taṃ - but, that thought
tato aññathā hoti - happens in a totally different way
vinā bhāvo - separation
etādiso - in such an instance
lokassa pariyāyaṃ - nature of the world
passa - see

We plan out things in a variety of ways. But, our plans are quite likely to go astray. Such an instance is separation from loved ones. Through such events you can see the real nature of life. Human life is governed, in many instances, by the unexpected.

People as a rule plan out a variety of things. When people are in their childhood they have many dreams. As young men and young women, they have ideas about how their future should be. As they become mature, what they want to do and their plans begin to increase. But, whatever the age, whatever the plan, things are quite likely to go wrong.

In the lives of all human beings we can see this happen. But, the truth of this situation comes home with great impact when we see outstanding men and women affected by this universal principle. Princess Diana planned a pleasant trip on that fateful Sunday, 31st August, 1997. But she could not reach her destination. Death claimed her on the way quite tragically. People get into a ferry-boat to cross a stream. But mid-stream their boat capsizes. A mother brings up her little daughter with tremendous affection. She grows up into a radiant young woman. The mother dreams, seeing her as a beautiful bride, taking her place by the side of her groom. But, this is not going to be. Suddenly, shockingly, Death strikes. She is bereft of her lovely daughter. Her dreams are shattered. All the plans she had vanish into thin air. This, then, is the nature of the world. Again, this is how human life is gripped by the unexpected. Separation from those you like is utterly shocking, but human beings must come to terms with that kind of development because that is how life is. To come to terms with life's disharmonies, (**bhāvanā**) meditation is helpful.

What is meditation? Meditation by means of mind development is called **bhāvanā.** Unlike other technical terms, **bhāvanā** is used to denote only the practical methods of mental training. It embraces in its vast connotation the whole system, together with the practices that have been developed from it. When the term **bhāvanā** occurs in the Scriptures, it generally indicates the practice or cultivation of meditation and the verb **bhāveti** is used to denote the act: to practise, or to cultivate, e.g.,

"**Mettaṁ, Rahula, bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi.**"
"Rahula, practise the meditation upon friendliness."
"**Asubhāya cittam bhāvehi.**"
"Cultivate the mind by the meditation upon impurities."

The proper spiritual cultivation of the mind starts with **bhāvanā.** (Reflection, meditation and contemplation)

Api ce vassa sataṃ jīve - Bhiyyo vā pana mānavo
Ñāti saṅghā vinā hoti - Jahāti idha jīvitaṃ

Even if a man were to live a hundred years or more,
he must still yield his life, at last bereft of friends and relatives.

API CE VASSA SATAṂ JĪVE

"Contemplation on death enables one to comprehend the fleeting nature of life. When one understands that death is certain and life is uncertain; one endeavours to make the best use of one's life by working for self-development and for the development of others, instead of wholly indulging in sensual pleasures. Constant meditation on death-does it not make one more active and energetic? Besides, one can face death with serenity."

Api ce vassa sataṃ jīve
Bhiyyo vā pana mānavo
Ñāti saṅghā vinā hoti
Jahāti idha jīvitaṃ

api ce - if, for some reason
mānavo pana - if a given individual
vassa sataṃ vā - a hundred years or
bhiyyo vā - more than that
jīve - were to live
ñāti saṅghā - one's relatives
vinā hoti - separated
idha jīvitaṃ - life here, in this world
jahāti - gives up

A given individual may, under certain circumstances, live to be a hundred or more. But, even after such a span of life he has to depart this life, separating from his clan of relatives. He will invariably have to give up this life one day.

Human life is ephemeral - transitory. When an individual departs this life, relatives grieve. The sense of separation is unbearable. Those who are left behind take some time to get back to their normal life.

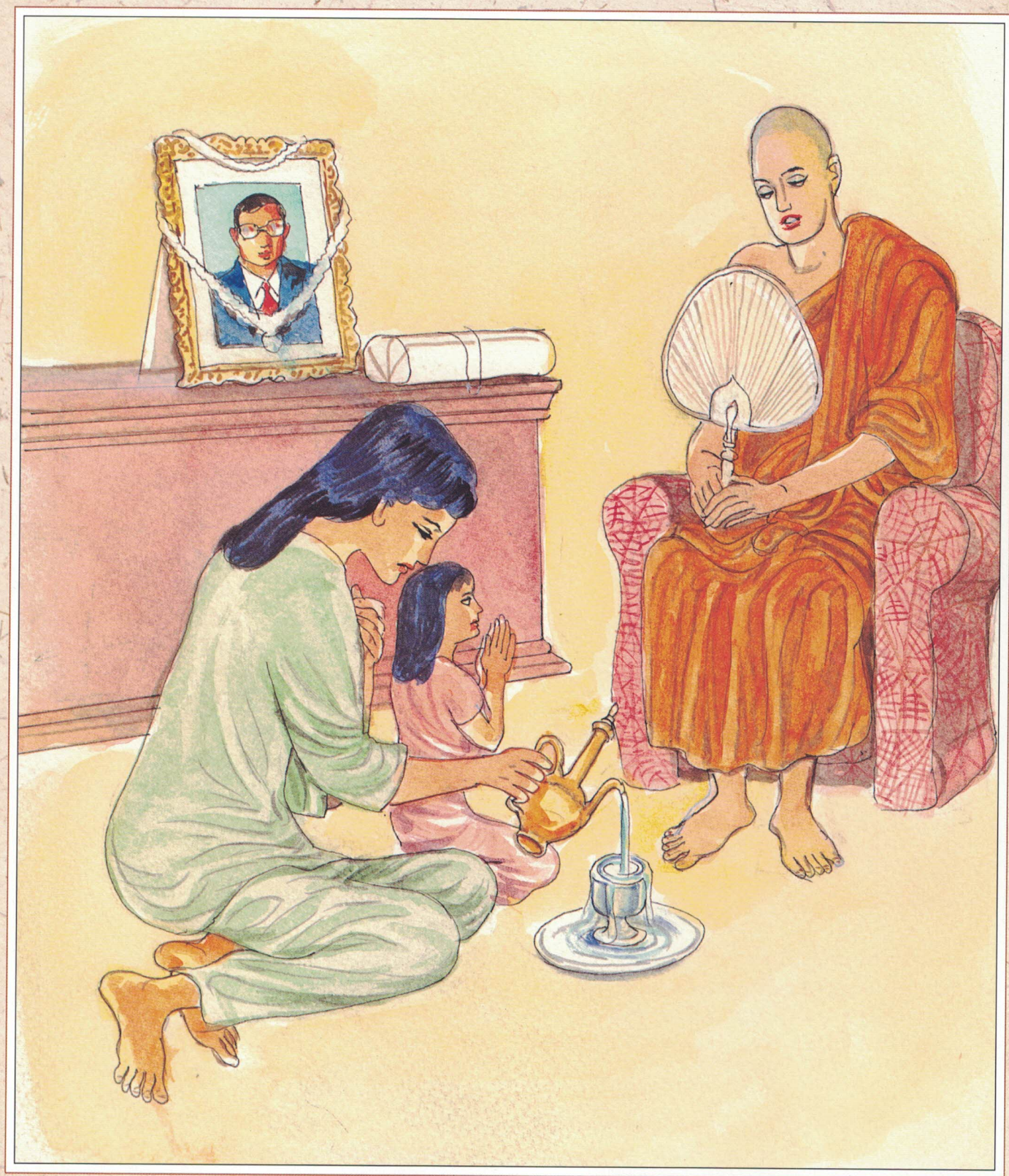
In the modern world there are many ways in which a person may prolong one's life. Health care systems have improved vastly. Drugs are greatly advanced. Medicines and hospitals have become greatly improved. As a result, it is possible for men and women to live longer lives. Even if such methods are used and the span of life is extended, what is the ultimate outcome? A person may live past his 100th year. But, he can never escape the cold grip of Death. In brief, however long a man may live, he can never alter his human destiny. He must die, one day. When a man dies even after a long spell of life, others, too, get plunged in grief. They remember all the good things the departed persons have rendered. The more they are recalled, the greater the pangs of separation.

To eradicate this sense of suffering one must discipline one's self by understanding the essential nature of life. In the real sense, life is very short, even though one's span may be a hundred.

Strictly speaking, the life of beings is exceedingly short indeed, lasting merely for one conscious moment. Just as a chariot-wheel, in rolling, rolls only at one point of the tyre, and resting, rests only at one point; in exactly the same way, the life of a living being lasts only for the period of a single thought. As soon as that thought has ceased, the being is said to have ceased.

Here, from the psychological point of view the duration of life is limited by one mental instant (**citta-kkhaṇa**) : for life is experienced only during the instant of mental existence, that is to say, for the three instants of thought: arising (**uppāda**), existing (**ṭhiti**) and ceasing (**bhaṅga**); the life endures only for the existing instant. Therefore a being is said to be living only while a **ṭhiti**-a moment of thought, is existing. In this connection we may recall the following:

"In the past thought-moment one lived; one does not live, nor will one live. In the future thought-moment one did not live; does not live; one will live. In the present thought-moment one did not live; one is living; one will not live."



Tasmā arahato sutvā - Vineyya paridevitaṃ
Petaṃ kālakataṃ disvā - Na so labbhā mayā iti

Therefore, listening to the wise and the holy and seeing a person departed,
control your weeping. Reflect on the departure of your beloved ones
by thinking that separation is natural.

TASMĀ ARAHATO SUTVĀ

" The nights and days go slipping by
As life keeps dwindling steadily
Till mortals' span, like water pools.
In falling rills, is all used up."

Visuddhi Magga

Tasmā arahato sutvā
Vineyya paridevitaṃ
Petaṃ kālakataṃ disvā
Na so labbhā mayā iti

tasmā - therefore
arahato - Buddha's Word
sutvā - having heard
kālakataṃ - who passed away
petaṃ - the departed
disvā - having seen
so - that departed person
mayā - by me
na labbhā iti - not able to obtain
paridevitaṃ - waiting and lamenting
vineyya - must quell

Those who are bereaved must listen to the Dhamma preached by the Buddha. When such person listens to the Dhamma he will realize that the person who has passed away cannot be brought back. Through that understanding one must tranquilize one's mind.

Those who are distracted by the death of a relative or a friend find it difficult to console themselves. This is because they just cannot understand how the deceased person was taken away from among them. The more they keep on thinking about their loss, the greater is their sorrow.

Whatever they do they just cannot forget the person who has passed away. It is at this stage that they must listen to the Word of the Buddha. Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, has seen with His all-seeing wisdom the nature of life and death. He has taught that it is the unalterable nature of life for people to pass away. However much we grieve we cannot bring back those who are dead.

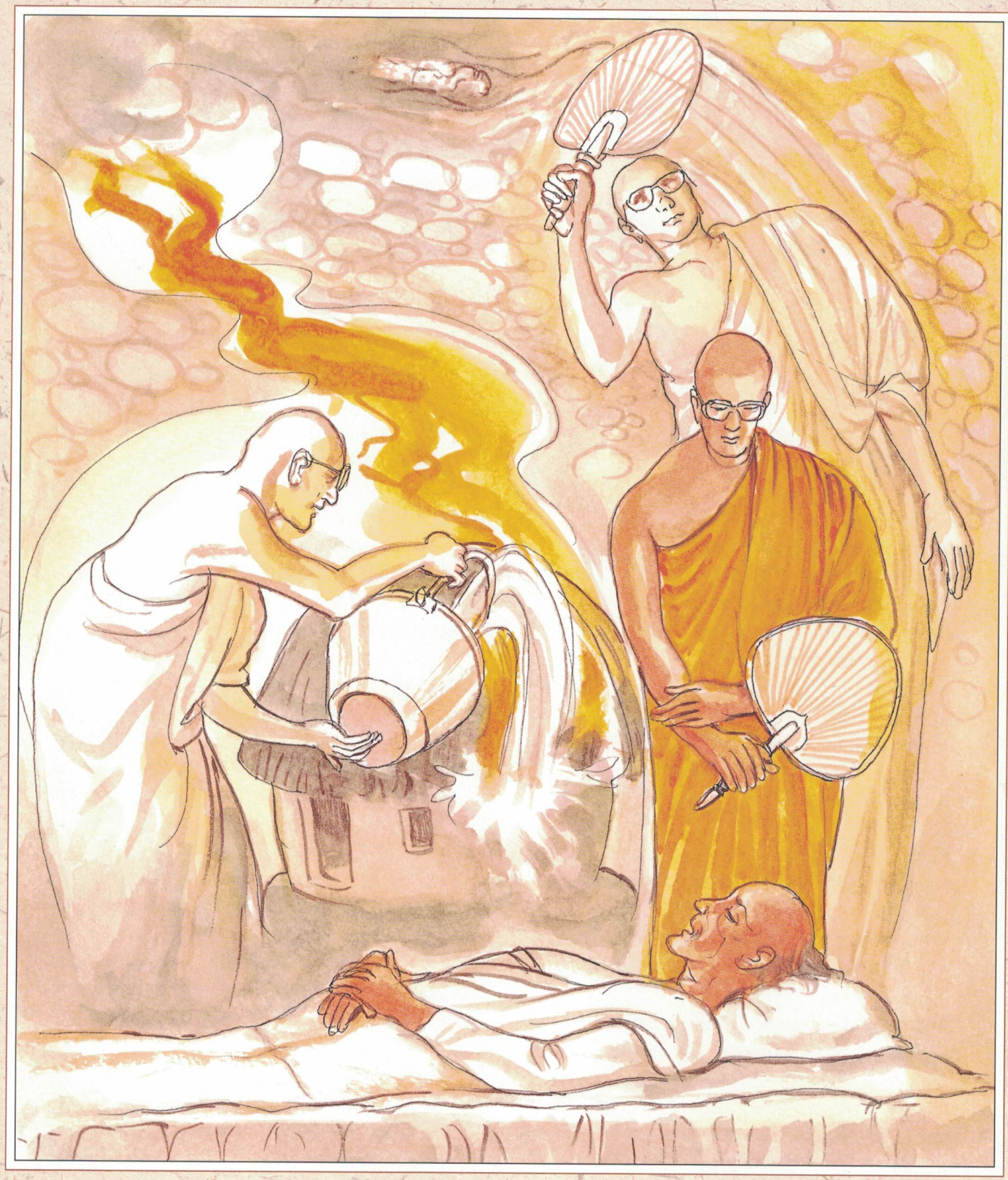
When those who bereave understand the Word of the Buddha, they will begin to understand the universal Truth - that life is transitory, that life is ephemeral, and that all created things come into being, exist and disappear.

Human life has three unalterable characteristics - '**anicca**' (impermanence), '**dukkha**'(suffering), and '**anatta**' (soul-lessness). If these conditions are inescapable, what can lamentation, wailing or weeping do? Those forms of mourning will not bring the dead back to life. That understanding will make the mind of the mourner tranquil.

Weeping and wailing for those who are gone will have no effect whatsoever on the departed. Sorrowing is of no use even to the living. One must realize the true nature of death, and acheive Liberation.

Phenūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā
Marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno
Chetvāna mārassa papupphakāni
Adassanaṃ maccurājassa gacche

Knowing that this body is like foam, and comprehending its mirage nature, one should destroy the flower-shafts of sensual passions , and pass beyond the sight of the king of Death.(**Māra**)



Yathā saraṇamādittaṃ - Vārinā parinibbaye
Evampi dhīro sappañño - Paṇḍito kusalo naro
Khippammuppatitaṃ sokaṃ - Vāto tūlaṃ va dhaṃsaye

Just as one would douse a burning house with water, even so let a steadfast and wise man remove grief, as quickly as the wind (a handful of) cotton.

YATHĀ SARAṆAMĀDITTAṂ

" What is laughter, what is joy, when the world is ever burning?
Shrouded by darkness, would you not seek the light?"

Dhammapada 146

Yathā saraṇamādittaṃ
Vārinā parinibbaye
Evampi dhīro sappañño
Paṇḍito kusalo naro
Khippammuppatitaṃ sokaṃ
Vāto tūlaṃ va dhaṃsaye

yathā - just as
ādittaṃ- on fire
saraṇaṃ - a house
vārinā - with water
parinibbaye - extinguish
evampi - the same way
dhīro - the courageous
sappañño - the wise
kusalo -efficient
uppatitaṃ - that arises in the mind
paṇḍito naro - the wise person
sokaṃ - sorrow
vāto - wind
khippaṃ - instantly
tūlaṃ iva - just as a little cotton wool wafted in the wind
dhaṃsaye - should send away

When a house is on fire it can be extinguished with water. People resort to that method in most instances. This is a fire we can see. But, within people there are fires. That kind of fire is not seen from outside. Therefore, these internal fires are difficult to put out.

To put out the fire that burns a house, sturdy men and women can get together. But, it is not at all easy to quench a fire that burns inside an individual. In this situation one's own effort is needed. Most ordinary men and women may not be able to master that effort. It can be done only by learned men and women. Wise men and women know how to deal with the fire of sorrow that burns within them. They must, through their wisdom, make their sorrow waft away, just as a whiff of cotton wool in the wind.

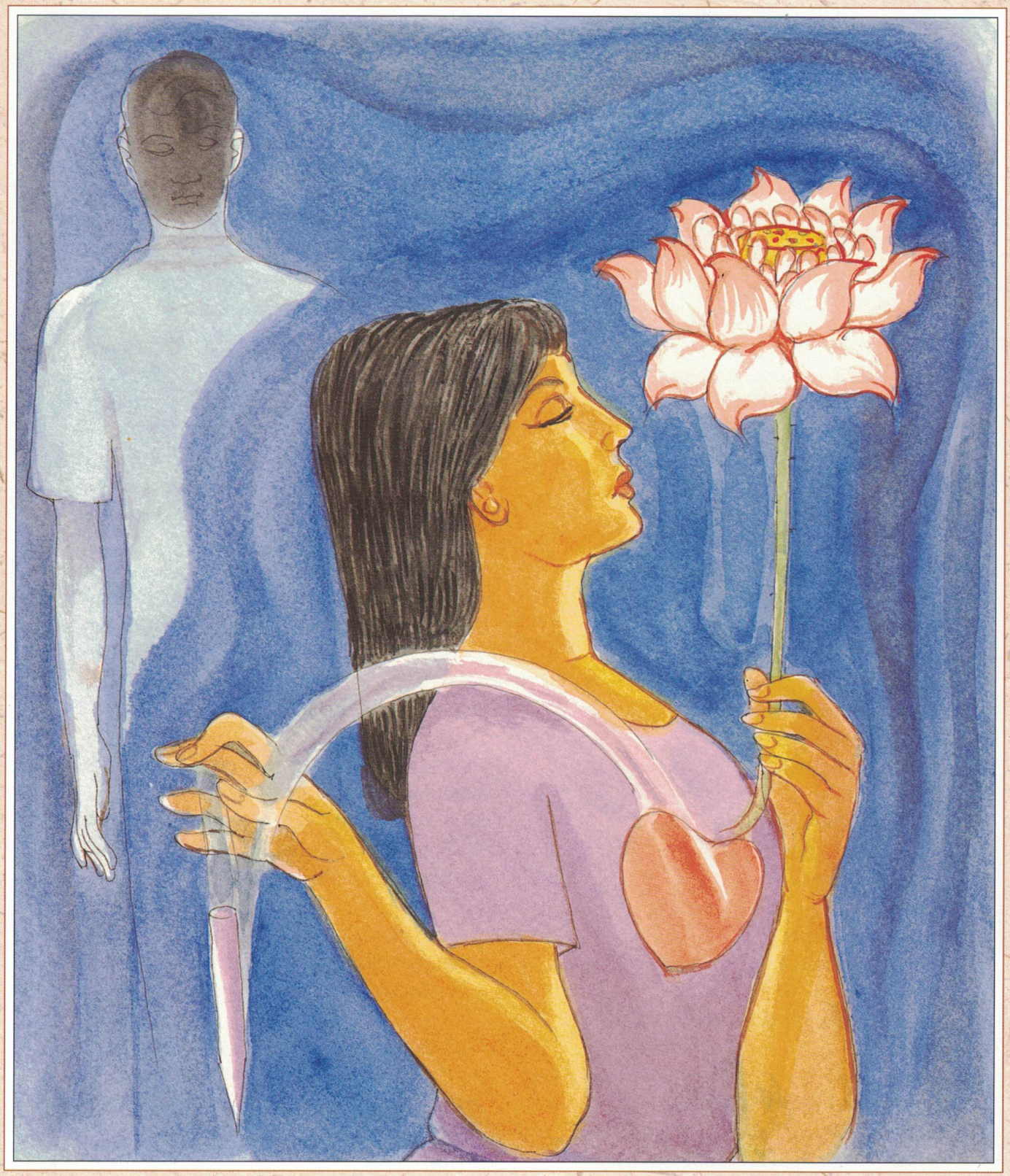
How can wise people do this? They can come to understand the real nature of a situation through their wisdom. When some tragedy takes place they are capable of understanding the reality of that tragic event. When they see the inner reality they can have a total control over their sorrow.

Discipline your mind and cope with the cause of sorrow. Allow these sorrows to waft away in the wind. Worldlings are always aflame. They are burning up inside with passion, greed, craving, ignorance, hatred and other defilements.

To overcome the 'fires' inside a person, the most effective antidote is meditation. It makes the mind calm and tranquil.

" As one who wants to break a wild young calf would tether it to a stout stake, similarly, the meditator should tie his mind fast to the object of meditation."

This kind of taming of the mind, enabling them to see reality, is not at all easy for most people. This is because most minds are 'biased'and 'coloured'. In consequence, dispassionate viewing becomes an impossibility. It is only a wise person who can train his mind to see things clearly and objectively.



Paridevaṃpajappañca - Domanassañca attano
Attano sukhamesāno - Abbahe sallamattano

Let a person, desirous of his own welfare,
pluck the shafts of wails and grief that he himself planted.

PARIDEVAṂ PAJAPPAÑCA

"The mind is very hard to perceive, extremely subtle, flits wherever it listeth.
Let the wise person guard it. A guarded mind is conducive to happiness."

Dhammapada 36

Paridevaṃ pajappañca
Domanassañca attano
Attano sukha mesāno
Abbahe salla mattano

attano sukhaṃ- one's own happiness
esāno - seeking
attano - in one's own mind
paridevaṃ - lamenting
pajappaṃ cā - longing
domanassañca - distress
sallaṃ - the spike
abbahe - pull out

If one is interested in one's own happiness, if one seeks to be free of lamentation and wailing, one must pull out the spike of sorrow from one's mind.

The nature of beings is to suffer various forms of disappointments. Such situations bring about sorrow. In their search for happiness most people find reasons for lamenting and wailing. Their minds and hearts are filled with unhappiness. Ironically, what they get is totally different from what they looked for.

Instead of constant joy and happiness, most men and women are found to be constanty weeping. Their hearts are troubled by wishes that they could not fulfil. These unfulfilled yearnings act like spikes that pierce their hearts. What is it that can prevent this kind of sorrow - this lamentation? These disappointments, failures and the incapacity to achieve happiness are due largely to those 'spikes' that pierce their hearts. These spikes bring about non-stop bleeding. Therefore, those who are keen to achieve relief must recognize the spike that pierces their hearts. Once they realize what kind of 'spike' it is, they can pull it out.

They will then experience a tremendous happiness. These spikes are made of our own cravings. Therefore, it is easy to know them and get rid of them. But some men and women do not find it that easy. This is because they have come to be attached to their 'spikes' that torture them.

It is easy to advise such worldlings to give up their 'spikes'. But it is not as easy as all that to implement that advice. A strenuous training of the mind is needed to get rid of them. That is where mind culture comes in.

What is initially essential is to search for the 'spikes' that have pierced one's mind. For this a keen attempt at training one's mind should be made. The 'spikes' are (**salla**) passion, lust, craving, ignorance and other defilements. When these are pulled out, one's mind becomes "cool".

In the modern world dominated by limitless consumers, the 'spikes' that pierce the minds and hearts of people are numerous. The media of the contemporary world are full of what makes people yearn for things that they really do not want. These media-calls to consume various goods and services are so efficiently crafted, that those coming under their influence begin to yearn for them. When those needs and desires cannot be fulfilled they tend to feel a troubling frustration.

Abbūlha sallo asito - Santiṃ pappuyya cetaso
Sabba sokaṃ atikkanto - Asoko hoti nibbuto

Having plucked out these shafts and having attained mental peace,
he becomes blessed and free from grief, overcoming all sorrows.

ABBŪLHA SALLO ASITO

" If someone escapes craving in this world, sorrows fall off such a person, like water drops from a lotus leaf."

Dhammapada 336

Abbūlha sallo asito
Santiṃ pappuyya cetaso
Sabba sokaṃ atikkanto
Asoko hoti nibbuto

abbūlha sallo - with the spike of sorrow pulled out
asito - he who has set aside craving and wrong beliefs
cetaso santiṃ - tranquillity of the mind
pappuyya - having reached
sabba sokaṃ - all sorrows
atikkanto - having eliminated
nibbuto - having become serene
asoko hoti - becomes a non-sorrower

He who has pulled out the spike of sorrow, and has discarded craving and wrong beliefs, reaches tranquillity of mind. He who has eliminated all sorrows, having become serene by destroying defilements, will become a non-sorrower.

All human beings have various forms of spikes driven into them. These "spikes" are defilements that create pains for us. These pains come about because of our attachments. Our passions and deep emotions cause us various difficulties and much pain. Ill-will, which is hatred, is also a sharp spike that goes deep into our being, causing us agonies. Ignorance is yet another spike that will hurt us. The effort of the seeker of liberation is to pull out these various "spikes" that hurt him deeply. When the spikes are deep within one's being, he is full of sorrow. Each form of pain generates a whole series of sorrows. The aim of the seeker after truth is to eliminate sorrow.

Beings are troubled by sorrow because they keep on craving constantly. They chase after a variety of goals, driven by wrong beliefs - which too cause sorrow. The person who has succeeded in discarding craving and wrong beliefs is at peace. His mind is no longer troubled. When this happens he would have pulled out the spikes of sorrow.

When the mind is tranquil and when he has eliminated all sorrows, he would then have discarded all defilements. A being who has eliminated all defilements will be totally calm. He is beyond sorrow. When an individual has fully given up sorrow he has come to the end of his spiritual quest. He will never have cause for sorrow anymore. He has become a sorrowless one.

This central idea is quite effectively communicated in the following stanza:

Taṇhāya jāyatī soko
Taṇhāya jāyati bhayaṃ
Taṇhāya vippamuttassa
Natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ

Dhammapada 216

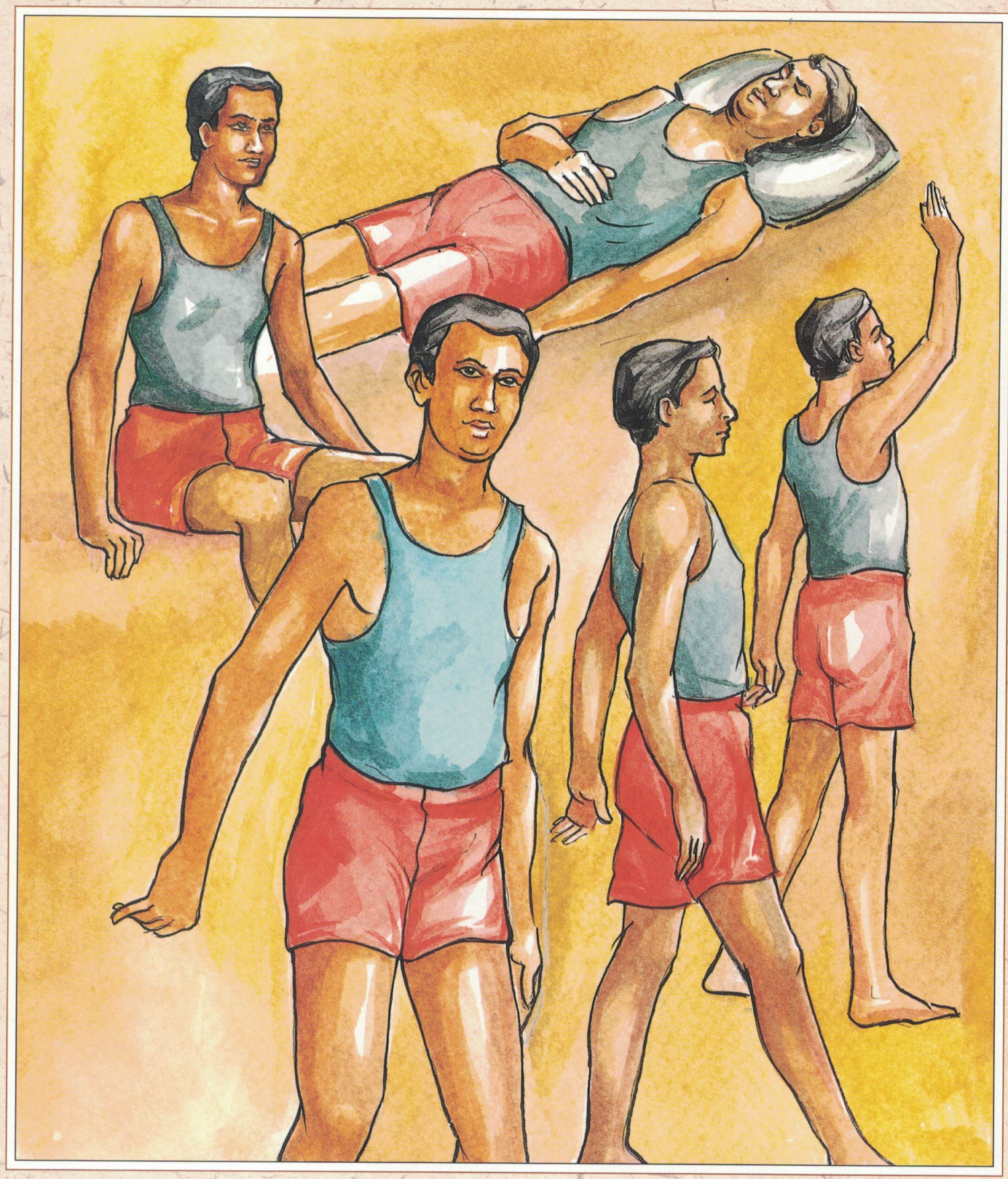
From craving springs grief, from craving springs fear; to those who are wholly free from craving there is no grief, much less fear.

Buddhism is a religion for mental adults.
It does not sugar-coat the bitter pills of life or pretend that
death is the gateway to everlasting happiness.
It does not promise easy salvation
in exchange for unquestioning faith in some
supreme deity. It teaches self-reliance and
a sense of personal responsibility.

VIJAYA SUTTA

DISILLUSION OR VICTORY

Furthermore,
all health ends in sickness, all youth ends in ageing,
all life ends in death;
all worldly existence is procured by birth,
haunted by ageing, surprised by sickness,
and struck down by death.
Hence it is said:
As though huge mountains made of rock
So vast they reached up to the sky
Were to advance from every side,
Grinding beneath them all that lives,
So age and death roll over all
Warriors, priests, merchants and craftsmen,
The outcasts and the scavengers,
Crushing all beings, sparing none.
And here no troops of elephants,
No charioteers, no infantry,
No strategy in form of spells,
No riches, serve to beat them off
This is how death should be recollected
as the 'ruin of success' by defining it
as death's final ruining of life's success.



Caraṃ vā yadi vā tiṭṭhaṃ - Nisinno udavā sayaṃ
Sammiñjeti pasāreti - Esā kāyassa iñjanā

If while walking, standing, sitting or lying down,
a person were to draw in or stretch forth a limb, it is only a
movement of the (mortal) body.

CARAṂ VĀ YADI VĀ TIṬṬHAṂ

Gate tiṭṭhe nisinne sutte - Jāgarite bhāsite tuṇhībhāve
Sampajānakārī hoti - Iti ajjhattaṃ vā - kāye kāyānupassī viharati

" In walking, standing, siting, falling asleep, waking, speaking and being silent, he practises clear comprehension. Thus, he lives practising internally body contemplation in the body."

Caraṃ vā yadi vā tiṭṭhaṃ
Nisinno udavā sayaṃ
Sammiñjeti pasāreti
Esā kāyassa iñjanā

yadi caraṃ vā - if walking
yadi tiṭṭhaṃ vā - if standing
yadi nisinno - if sitting
uda - or else
sayaṃ vā - while sleeping
sammiñjeti - if hands and legs are bent
pasāreti - stretches
esā - this action
kāyassa - of the body
iñjanā - movement

People indulge in various actions. They walk. They sit down. They stand. Or else, they lie down. They bend their hands and legs. At times they stretch their hands and legs. All these actions together are called body's movements.

Life of a human being depends entirely on a whole series of actions. That being walks around. At times he stands, or else he may sit down. If he is not engaged in those actions he may lie down. There are occasions when a person bends his legs or hands. He may stretch his hands or legs. All these actions form the movement of the body. A body that can move that way is said to be alive. The fact of the existence of a human being is determined by this movement. Where there is no movement, life is considered gone. If a being is bereft of movement, he is dead. Just like the body the mind, too, moves. The actions and the movements of the mind are not as easy to see as bodily actions and bodily movements. Once the bodily actions and bodily movements cease, the mind and the thought-processes, too, die.

When all these matters are duly considered, 'life' is a whole series of body-movements and mind-movements.

In a living human being, 'life' implies action of body and mind. When the mental processes cease, the body movements, too, come to an end. This mind-body movement (life) of human beings is rather brief. When the actions of the body entity stop, the body becomes useless.

Aciraṃ vat'ayaṃ kāyo
Paṭhaviṃ adhisessati
Chuddho apetaviññāno
Niratthaṃ'va kalingaraṃ

"Before long, alas! this body will lie upon the ground, cast aside, devoid of consciousness, even as a useless charred log."

The body, bereft of action, begins to disintegrate. Facts that lead to the body's decay take over. The meditator is asked to contemplate objectively on the process that sets in, once the actions of the body and mind cease on death. Life in short is action of body and mind.

Aṭṭhi nahāru saṃyutto - Taca maṁsāvalepano
Chaviyā kāyo paṭicchanno - Yathā bhutaṃ na dissati

This body, knit with bones, sinews, plastered with flesh and tissues and covered with skin does not appear in its real form.

AṬṬHI NAHĀRU SAṂYUTTO

Yānimāni apattāni - alāpūn'eva sārade
Kāpotakāni aṭṭhini - tāni disvāna kā rati

"Like gourds cast away in autumn are these dove-hued bones. What pleasure is there in looking at them?"

Dhammapada 149

Aṭṭhi nahāru saṃyutto
Taca maṁsāva lepano
Chaviyā kāyo paṭicchanno
Yathā bhutaṃ na dissati

aṭṭhi nahāru saṃyutto - put together by bones and sinews
tacamaṃsā avalepano - rounded with skin and flesh
chaviyā - by tissue
paṭicchanno - covered on all sides
kāyo - the body
yathā bhūtaṃ - as it exactly is
na dissati - not seen

This body is put together with bones and sinews. The bone structure is bound in place with the sinews. On that frame built of bones and sinews, a cover of flesh and skin is provided. The whole form is wrapped up with tissue. Generally, the real nature of this body cannot be seen. Masses do not see how it is structured.

This body is like an architectural construction. In this body the bones are held together by binding them with sinews. This outline is filled with flesh and skin. The structure is wrapped with tissue. Therefore, it is difficult to see its real form. We see only the outside of the structure. Forming opinions about its true appearance becomes difficult.

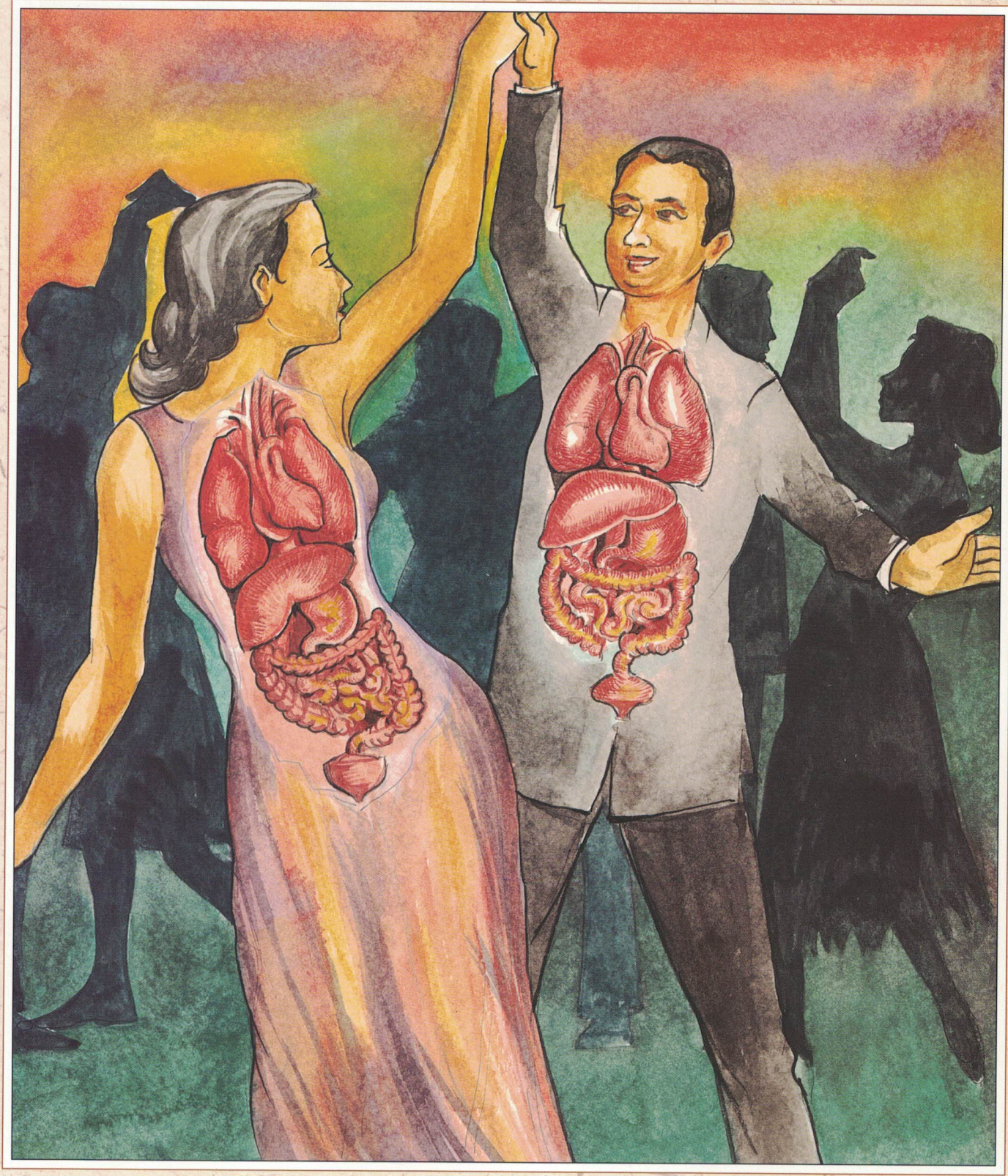
The intention of this stanza is to make beings aware of the true nature of the body. Once the true nature dawns upon beings, the attachment to the body gets diminished. It will then be possible for people to make the right use of their bodies. They will then use it only for the purpose of doing virtuous things. The body, seen for what it really is, makes the mind liberated. In many statements made by the Supremely Enlightened One, He points out that Liberation occurs due to the proper understanding of one's body. This stanza, too, stresses the same idea. The image here is that of a tent put up hurriedly. And the meditator is asked to consider the real nature of the body and be mindful of its structure.

This Dhammapada stanza indicates how the contemplation on the true structure of the body leads to the liberation of the mind.

Yesañ ca susamāraddhā
Niccaṃ kāyagatā sati
Akiccaṃ te na sevanti
Kicce sātaccakārino
Satānaṃ sampajānānaṃ
Atthaṃ gacchanti āsavā

"Those who always earnestly practise mindfulness of the body, who follow not what should not be done, and constantly do what should be done, of those mindful and reflective ones, the corruptions come to an end."

At this stage, it should be understood that the contemplation on the real nature of the body, purges the mind of misconceptions concerning ideas of individuality, and makes way for the insight formation conducive to the attainment of **Nibbāṇa**.



Antapūrodara pūro - Yakapeḷassa vatthino
Hadayassa papphāsassa - Vakkassa pihakassa ca

Within, it is stuffed with entrails, liver, paunch, heart,
and bladder, kidneys, lungs and spleen.

ANTAPŪRODARA PŪRO

"There is one state, Monks, which, being developed and repeatedly practised, conduces to great religious emotion, great benefit, great freedom from bondage, great mindfulness and self-possession, the attainment of knowledge and insight, the happy state in this visible life, the realization of the fruit of knowledge and release. What is that one state? Mindfulness of the body....."

Antapūrodara pūro
Yakapeḷassa vatthino
Hadayassa papphāsassa
Vakkassa pihakassa ca

antapūro - filled with intestines
udarapūro - full of undigested food
yakapela- liver
vatthino - anus
hadaya - heart
papphāsa - lungs
vakka - kidneys
pihaka - spleen

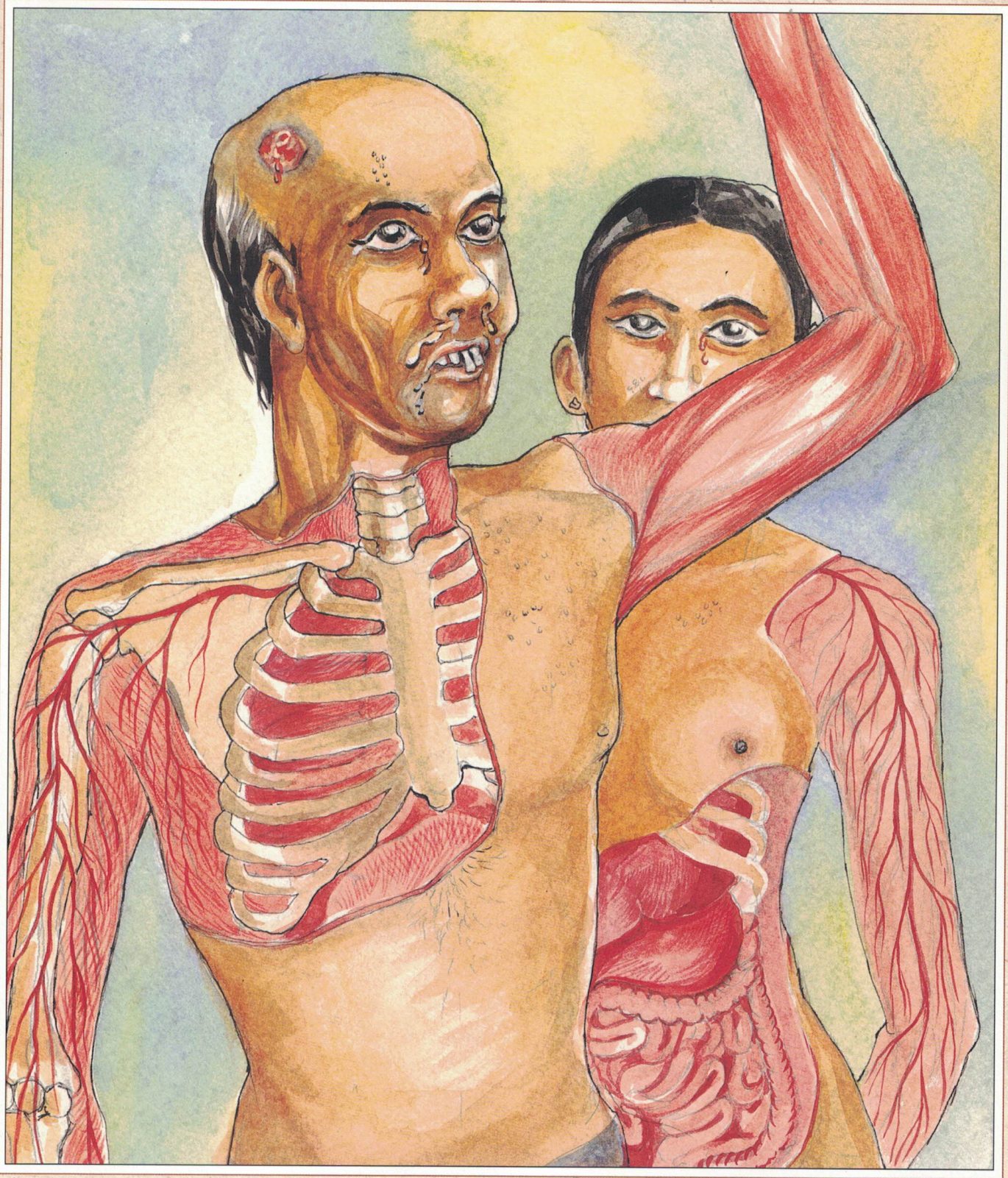
This body is filled with intestines. The stomach is full of undigested food. Inside the body is located the liver. There is the anal passage. Inside the body there is the heart. Lungs are there, too. Then you have the kidneys and, again, the spleen. The present stanza gives at least a preliminary awareness of the real nature of the body. The stanza describes what is not seen from outside. Inside, the body is filled with intestines. A good part of the human body's inner space is filled with intestines. Part of the body's inner space is filled with undigested food. Other areas of the inner body are occupied by the most vital organs. There is the liver. Part of the inner space is occupied by the anal system. The most vital of organs is the heart. There are the lungs, the kidneys and the spleen. This way, there are various parts of the body that are not seen.

Those people who meditate must become comprehensively aware of the real nature of the body. If you take only a superficial view of the body, its true nature cannot be fully understood. That explains the reason why these stanzas describe the inner realities of the body. This stanza makes a reference to the inner organs of the human body. Mindfulness of the body is a special aspect of the mind-culture in the Buddhist system. According to **Visuddhimagga**, the mindfulness of the body had never been practised in a religion prior to the Buddha's advent. The Buddha holds body-contemplation in high esteem.

Those who do not enjoy mindfulness of body do not enjoy deathlessness (**amata**); those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness. Those who have not enjoyed mindfulness of the body have not enjoyed deathlessness; those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness : those who have not neglected mindfulness of the body have not neglected deathlessness.

In the **Mahā Satipaṭṭhana Sutta** this system is given as a part of the whole method prescribed for attaining **Nibbāna**. It is there named "Contemplation on the Body" (**Kāyānupassanā**), and contains fourteen parts; it also occurs in the **Kāyagatā-sati Sutta** with the same fourteen divisions, as a **Kammaṭṭhāna,** and is an independent method of meditation productive of great results. The description opens with:

> " How, O Monks, should mindfulness of the body be developed, and how should it be practised in order to yield great fruits, to be conducive to great benefit? Herein, a monk, having gone to the forest or the foot of a tree, or an empty house, sits down cross-legged and upright, setting mindfulness before him...."



Siṅghāṇikāya kheḷassa - Sedassa medassa ca
Lohitassa lasikāya - Pittassa ca vasāya ca

(It is also stuffed) with spittle, snot, sweat
and blood and with joints lubricating bile and fat.

SIṄGHĀṆIKĀYA KHEḶASSA

"Up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair and contained in the skin, the body is full of many kinds of filth." Body: the carcass; for it is the carcass that is called body (kāya) because it is a conglomeration of filth, because such vile (kucchita) things as the head hairs etc., and the hundred diseases beginning with eye disease, have it as their origin (āya).

Siṅghāṇikāya kheḷassa
Sedassa medassa ca
Lohitassa lasikāya
Pittassa ca vasāya ca

siṅghāṇikā - mucus
kheḷa - saliva
seda - sweat
meda - fat
lohita - blood
lasikā - synovic fluid
pitta - bile
vasāya - serum

Inside the body there are various impurities. There is mucus. Then again, there is saliva. Out of the body sweat oozes out. There is fat and, above all, blood. There is marrow. Bile is also part of the bodily system. There is serum, too.

In this stanza some of the liquids that ooze out of the human body are enumerated. There is, for instance, what oozes out of the nose. Then there is saliva oozing out of the mouth. The body perspires, producing sweat. Among the body's liquids is also fat. Of all the liquids of the body the most vital, of course, is blood. The body contains bile and serum, too. Marrow, too, is part of the body's content. The purpose of the stanza is to make it clear that various impurities ooze out of the body. Although the body looks attractive from outside, the impurities that issue out of it give an idea of the true state of the body's inside.

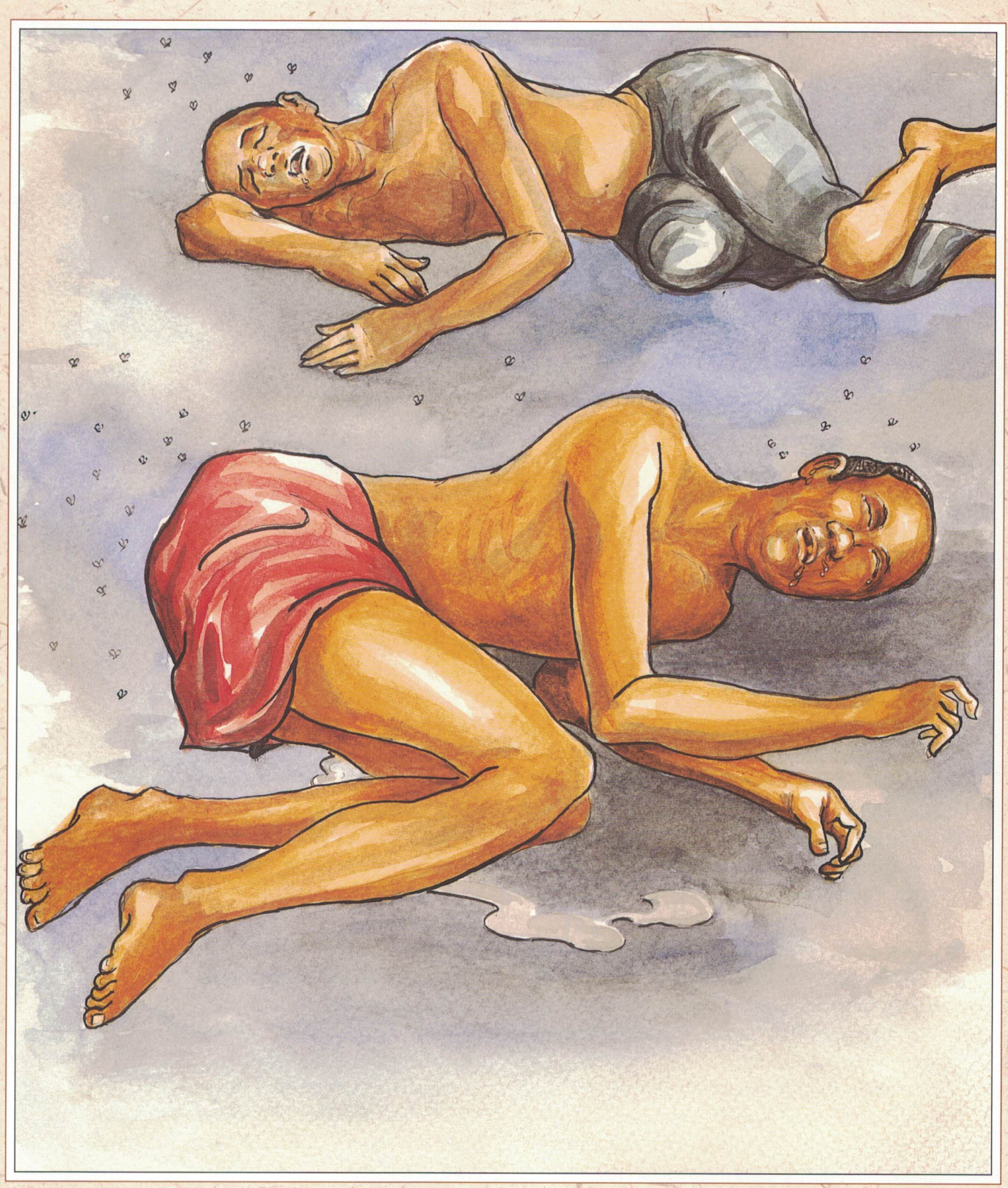
What it seems from outside may belie the reality of the body's inside. Though we decorate the exterior of the body, inside, it is full of impurities. The importance of reflection upon the body has been extensively stressed in almost all the outstanding Buddhist works.

The body, being the instrument of consciousness on the physical plane, supports the mind in its various activities, but becomes a hindrance and bondage when it is not properly understood. It is just like an instrument which has been made for a good purpose but which becomes a fatal weapon when it is wrongly used through absence of mindfulness.

There may be but few educated persons who do not understand the nature of the physical body; nevertheless, all who have been misled by various passions and misconceptions, have been deluded by the illusory appearance of this physical body. Hence, arise the vast sum of selfishness and lustfulness, and the torments they cause, which are to be eliminated only by decreasing attachment to the physical body.

According to Buddha's Teaching attachment to the physical body (**Rūpa-rāgā**) is one of the ten fetters which bind beings to the wheel of **Saṃsāra**-the repetition of birth and death, that causes woe and pain.

Therefore, the disciple of meditation who endeavours to put an end to his **Saṃsāra** must not only free himself from the bondage of the phenomenal body, but likewise remove the fetters of emotional feeling and attachment, together with the conception of individual personality.



Athassa navahi sotehi - Asuci savati sabbadā
Akkhimhā akkhi gūthako - Kaṇṇamhā kaṇṇa gūthako

Furthermore, from its nine apertures, there issue forth always impure substances, like filth discharged from the eyes and the ears.

ATHASSA NAVAHI SOTEHI

A man esteems purification most. The things which a man holds dear are such means of adorning himself as sweet perfume, unguents and pastes and beautiful clothes, mats and cushions used for sleeping and sitting, bolsters, blankets, canopies, bedding, and various kinds of food and drink, dwelling-places and gifts. A man manifests much attachment to these and afterwards dislikes them. Thus, one should reflect on the nature of the body through ' loathsomeness'.

Athassa navahi sotehi
Asuci savati sabbadā
Akkhimhā akkhi gūthako
Kaṇṇamhā kaṇṇa gūthako

atha - once again;
assa - in this body;
navahi sotehi -from nine orifices, nine doors;
sabbadā - always;
asuci - impurities;
savati - oozes;
akkhimhā - from the eye;
akkhigūthako - eye-waste;
kaṇṇamhā - from the ear;
kaṇṇagūthako - ear-waste.

Once again, this body could be contemplated. This body has nine doors - nine orifices. From these nine orifices, matter issues forth. This process takes place constantly. From the eye issues forth eye-waste. Ear-waste issues forth from the ear.

Though the body seems solid and pure in the exterior, inside it is full of impurities. These impurities keep on issuing forth from the body. They ooze from nine orifices. These orifices and the waste matter coming out of these show clearly that, though pleasant from outside, the body's inside is totally impure.

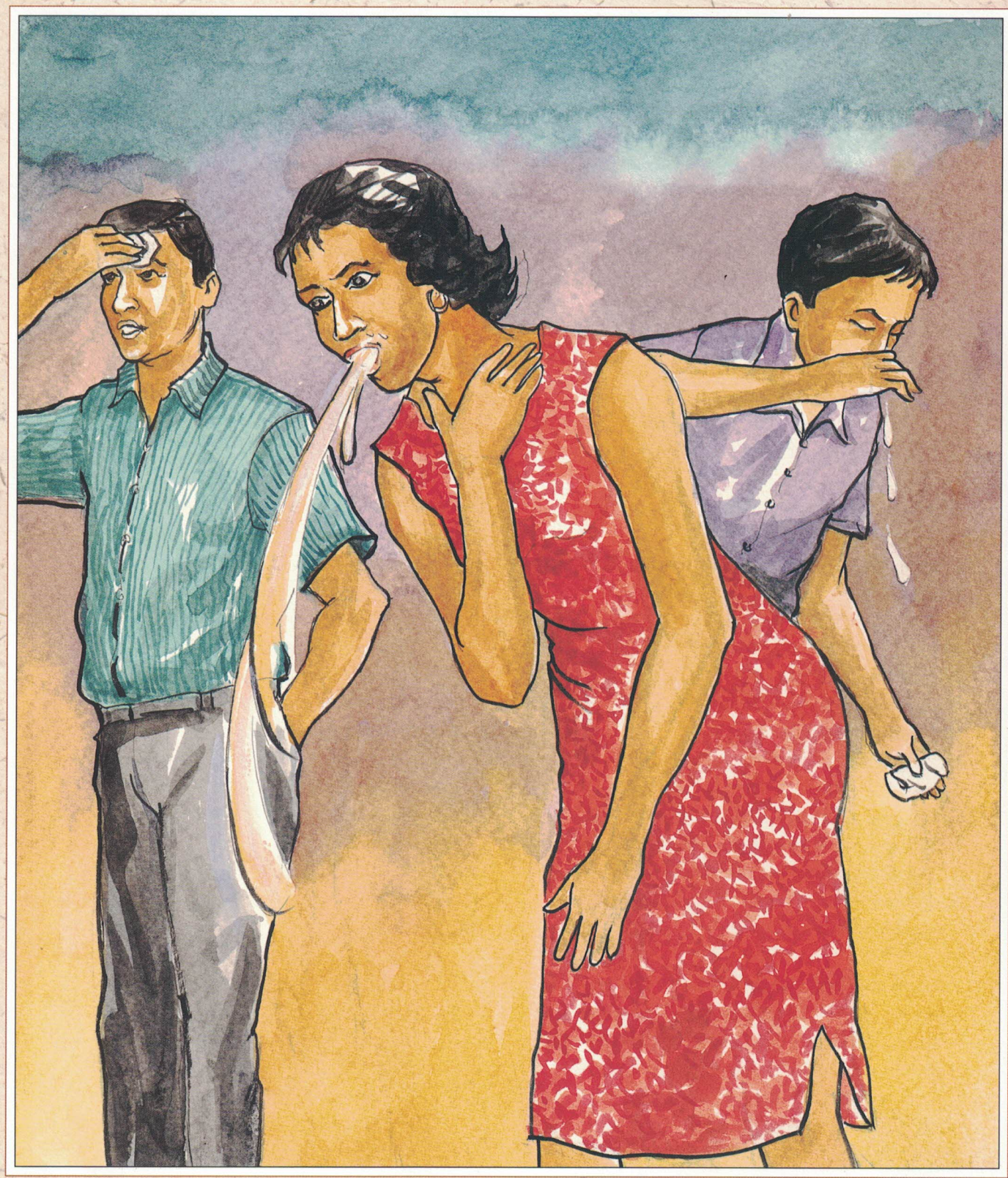
These orifices discharge matter non-stop. Of these orifices, the eye is one. Out of the eye issues eye-waste, tears being one form. Out of the ear oozes ear-waste. The present stanza indicates only a few of the nine doors. All these forms of matter are foul. If these limited quantities are so foul, one can imagine how foul their origin is. While the body is full of impurities people decorate it on the outside. It is very rarely that they try to ponder profoundly about the true nature of the body.

Several Buddhist texts, provide copious details about how the impurities of the body should be meditated upon. **Vissudhimagga** indicates several ways in which this meditation skill should be developed. Seven Methods are set down. The sevenfold skill in learning should be told thus:

(1) as verbal recitation,
(2) as mental recitation,
(3) as to colour,
(4) as to shape,
(5) as to direction,
(6) as to location,
(7) as to delimitation.

Having thus told the sevenfold skill in learning, he should tell the tenfold skill in giving attention as follows:

1. As to following the order (**Anupubba**)
2. Not too quickly (**Ñāti Sīgha**)
3. Not too slowly (**Ñāti Sanika**)
4. As to warding off distraction (**Vikkhepa Paṭibāhana**)
5. As to surmounting the concept (**Paṇṇatti Samatikkamana**)
6. As to successive leaving (**Anupubba Muñcana**)
7. As to absorption (**Appanā**)
8. Higher Consciousness (**Adhicitta Sutta**)
9. On Coolness (**Sitī bhāva Sutta**)
10. On skill in the Enlightenment Factors (**Bhojjaṅga Kosalla Sutta**)



Siṅghāṇikāca nāsāto - Mukhena vamatekadā
Pittaṃ semhaṃ ca vamati - Kāyamhā seda jallikā

Mucus from the nostrils, bile and phlegm from the mouth and sweat from the body.

SIṄGHĀṆIKĀ CA NĀSĀTO

"Thoroughly worn out is this body, a nest of diseases, perishable.
This putrid mass breaks up. Truly, life ends in death."

Dhammapada 148

Siṅghāṇikāca nāsāto
Mukhena vamatekadā
Pittaṃ semhaṃ ca vamati
Kāyamhā seda jallikā

nāsāto - out of the nose
siṅghāṇikā - mucus
ekadā - occasionally
mukhena - from the mouth
pittaṃ - bile
semhaṃ - phlegm
vamate - issues
kāyamhā - from the body
seda jallikā - impure sweat
vamati - oozes

From the nose issues forth mucus. From time to time the bile comes out of the mouth. So does phlegm. From the total body the impure sweat oozes.

This stanza continues to describe the real nature of the human body. Whatever may be its outer appearance, inside it is full of filth. These impurities come out from time to time. They issue out of various parts of the body. These impurities that issue forth are loathsome.

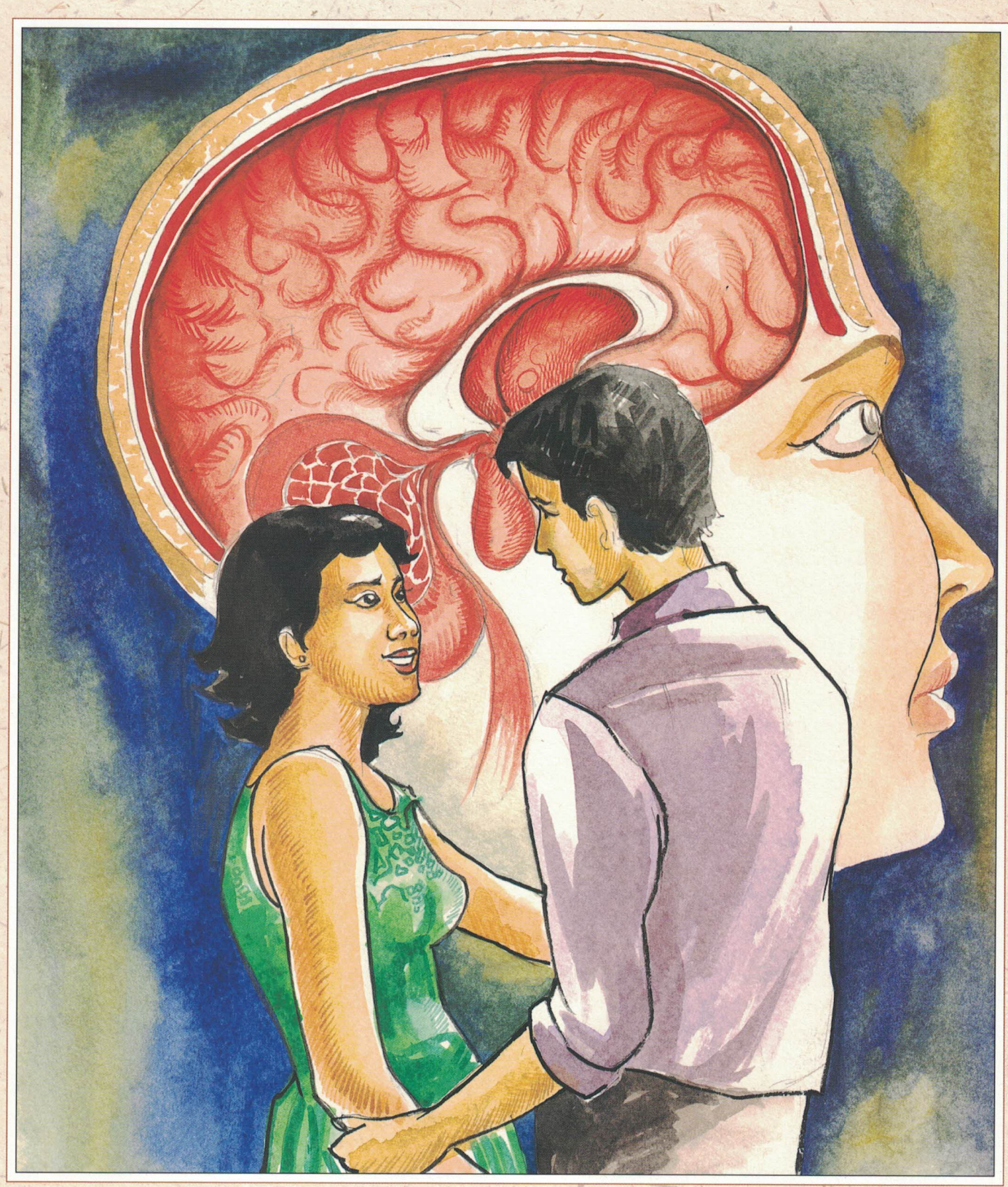
From the nose comes out mucus. When a being is healthy too, this impurity comes out of the nose from time to time, for various reasons. There has never been a being who would have failed to experience mucus issuing out of the nose. The running nose sends out mucus. When a person is affected by the cold or influenza his nose is ready to discharge mucus. This impurity is, therefore, known to everybody. The mouth is a source of a number of impurities. Occasionally, the bile issues forth from a person's mouth. Phlegm flows out of the mouth under certain circumstances. This is considered an impurity. Not only from various parts of the body, but from the total body, too, various impurities flow out.

Consider perspiration and sweat. When the body is exhausted, sweat pours out. It is mostly impure. There is hardly a pore in the body out of which perspiration does not flow. This way, the body has a method of releasing impurities from its inside.

If this much impurity can come out, what does it prove? It just goes to show that the body, which beings decorate and ornament from the outside, is a repository of impurities. And much of this impurity is foul and is repulsive.

Reflection on the repulsiveness of the body is a religious practice that recurs only during a Buddha-age. The following good results issue from the contemplation of the repulsiveness of the body:

(**Mahā saṃvega**) Great moral-emotional upsurge
(**Mahā yogakkhema**) The great tranquillity or security based on effort
(**Mahā sati sampajañña**) Great mindfulness and clear comprehension
(**ñānadassanapaṭilābha**) Attainment of insight knowledge
(**diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra**) Happy living here and now
(**vijjāvimuttiphalasacchikiriya**) Realization of the fruition of wisdom and freedom.



Athassa susiraṃ sīsaṃ - Matthaluṇgassa pūritaṃ
Subhato naṃmaññati balo - Avijjāya purakkhato

Fools, led by their ignorance, consider as wholesome this body with a brain filling up the hollow cranium.

ATHASSA SUSIRAṂ SĪSAṂ

"Just as a ship goes on by winds impelled - Just as a shaft goes by the bowstring's force,
So goes this body in its forward course - Full driven by the vibrant thrust of air.
As to the puppet's back the dodge- thread's tied - So to the body-doll the mind is joined
And pulled by that the body moves, stands, sits -Where is the living being that can stand,
Or walk, by force of its own inner strength - Without conditions that give it support?"

Athassa susiraṃ sīsaṃ
Matthaluṇgassa pūritaṃ
Subhato naṃmaññati balo
Avijjāya purakkhato

atha - once again
assa - in this body
susiraṃ - with a cavity
sīsaṃ - the head
matthaḷungassa - with brain matter
pūritaṃ - is filled
avijjāya purakkhato - with foolishness foremost
bālo - ignorant person
naṃ- that body
subhato - as good
maññati - considers

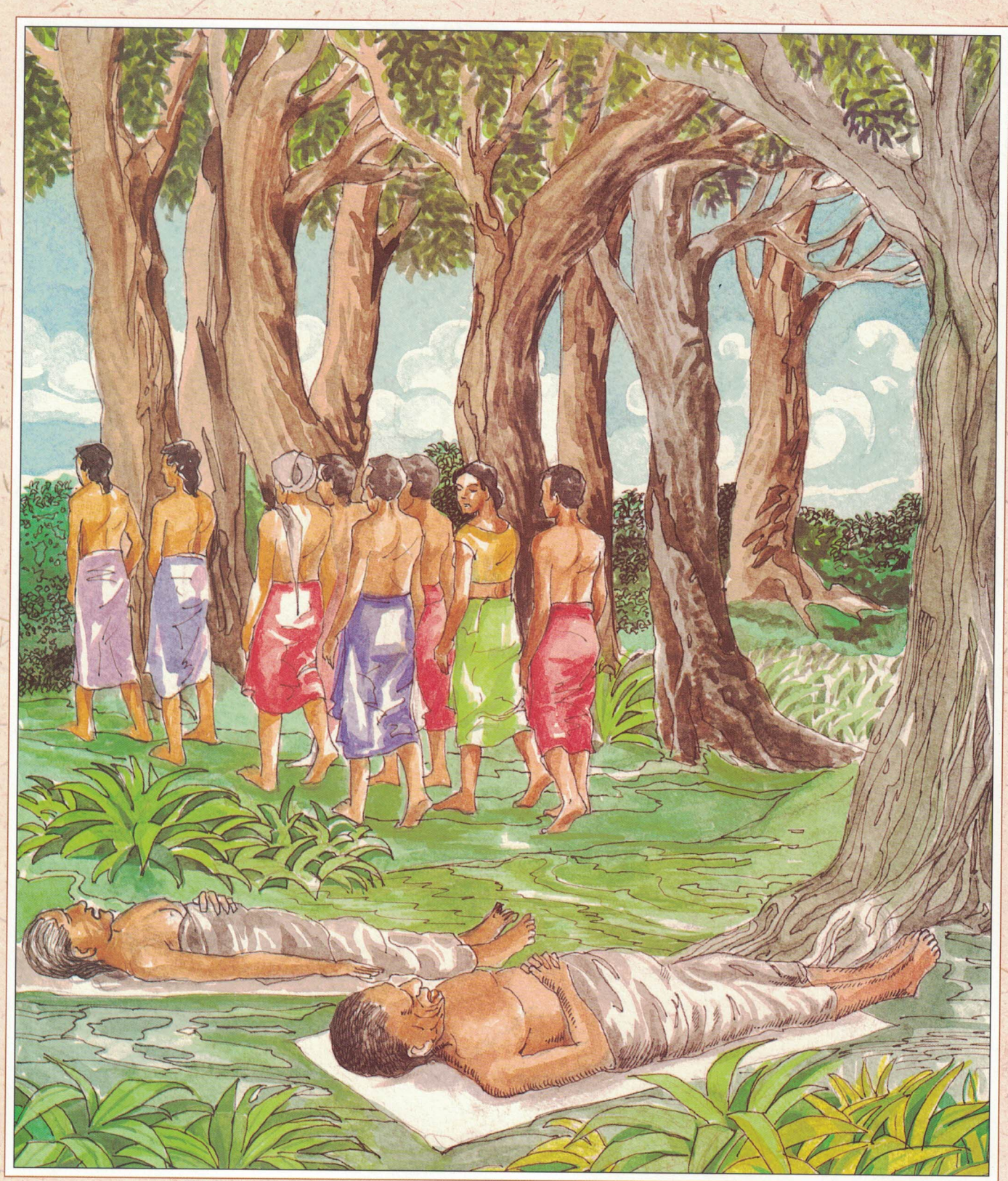
There is some more to this body. The head of a being is a cavity. It is filled with brain-matter. Those ignorant persons in whose mind ignorance is foremost, tend to consider this body a good thing, with all that. Each and every part of the body of beings is decidedly repulsive.

Consider once again, the nature of this body. Take the head, for instance. It is a large cavity. This cavity is filled with brain-matter. Some foolish people consider this an auspicious thing. The general view of the world is that the human brain is the source of everything. An individual's creativity is determined by the power of the brain. A child or an adult who is exceptional is described as a "brainy" person. Someone's creation is characterized as a "brain child". The purpose of education is taken to be the development of the efficacy of the brain. Some tend to believe that the brain is the seat of intelligence. Although the brain is celebrated that way, in reality, it is a lump of flesh filling the cavity of the head. Therefore, most organs of the human body are impure, however much people may esteem them. This stanza lays particular emphasis on the brain and brain matter. Although it is the seat of intelligence and wisdom in physical terms, it is only a lump of flesh.

The meditator contemplates the head and its cavity only as segments of the body - and not for what they do in terms of function. This is how **Visuddhimagga** defines the brain: This is the lump of marrow to be found inside the skull. As to colour, it is white, the colour of the flesh of a toadstool; it can also be said that it is the colour of churned milk that has not yet become curd. As to shape, it is the shape of its location.

As to direction, it belongs to the upper direction. As to location, it is to be found inside the skull, like four lumps of dough put together to correspond with the (skull's) four sutured sections. As to delimitation, it is bounded by the skull's inner surface and by what appertains to the brain.

The purpose of this stanza is to make meditators consider the nature of the brain as a physical presence. Irrespective of the tremendous functional value of the seat of intellectuality and analytical power, the brain, viewed as a physical object is only a lump of flesh. Intelligent persons can use the brain for the purpose of understanding the real nature of the body.



Yadā ca so mato hoti - Uddhumāto vinīlako
Apaviddho susānasmiṃ - Anapekkhā honti ñātayo

But, when as a dead body, he lies abandoned in a cemetery,
the relatives cease to show any care for him.

YADĀ CA SO MATO HOTI

"And further, O bhikkhu, if a bhikkhu, in whatever way, sees a body dead, one, two or three days; swollen, blue, and festering, thrown into the charnel ground, he thinks of his own body thus: 'Verily, this body of mine too is of the same nature as that body, is going to be like that body and has not got past the condition of becoming like that body.'"

Yadā ca so mato hoti
Uddhumāto vinīlako
Apaviddho susānasmiṃ
Anapekkhā honti ñātayo

yadāca - some time
so - that body
mato hoti - were to lie dead
uddhumāto - becomes swollen
vinīlako - turns blue
susānasmiṃ - in the cemetery
apaviddho - discarded
ñātayo - relatives
anapekkhā honti - give up hope

If this body were to die it will become blue. It will get swollen. Once it is swollen and turns blue, it is discarded in the cemetery. When it is abandoned in the cemetery the dead person's relatives give up all connections with him.

The living person is loved by many. People are usually attracted to him. The relatives of that person expect all kinds of things from him. They have various hopes about him. They have all kinds of plans for him. But, with all that, one day he dies. In spite of the attachments and affections they had for him, they will not keep his body when he dies.

The body begins to swell. It will soon turn blue. Those who were thoroughly attracted to him will no longer want to keep him at home. The close relatives who were so attached to him take the body along and discard it in the cemetery. All those relatives who entertained high hopes about him just discard the body away into the cemetery. They give up all hopes about him. This is the true picture of death.

This way, there is nothing glamorous about death. It is the way of life. The abandoned body is now left to animals. Though the relatives are gone the animals get to it. Dogs, jackals, wolves, crows, vultures and other predators attack the body abandoned by the relatives.

Death keeps on recurring. Dead bodies get abandoned equally recurrently. A discarded dead body disintegrates in several stages.

This following classification shows the stages of disintegration of a discarded dead body.

Uddhumātaka	- a swollen corpse
Vinīlaka	- a discoloured corpse
Vipubbaka	- a festering corpse
Vicchiddaka	- a fissured corpse
Vikkhāyitaka	- a mangled corpse
Vikkhittaka	- a dismembered corpse
Hatavikkhittaka	- a cut and dismembered corpse
Lohitaka	- a bleeding corpse
Puḷavaka	- a corpse infested with worms
Aṭṭhika	- a skeleton

The contemplation of the nature of a corpse in the process of decomposition, enables the meditator to get rid of all such defilements as craving, ill-will, and ignorance.

Khādanti naṃ suvāṇā ca - Sigāḷā ca vakā kimī
Kākā gijjhā ca khādanti - Ye caññe santi pāṇino

Then, dogs, jackals, wolves, worms, crows, vultures
and whatever other animals there may be, devour his flesh.

KHĀDANTI NAṂ SUVĀṆĀ CA

"Again, Monks, even as a monk seeing a body (corpse), (which is) discarded in the cemetery being devoured by crows, being devoured by vultures, being devoured by hawks, being devoured by dogs, being devoured by jackals, or being devoured by various kinds of small creatures."

Khādanti naṃ suvāṇā ca
Sigāḷā ca vakā kimī
Kākā gijjhā ca khādanti
Ye caññe santi pāṇino

naṁ - those dead bodies
suvāṇā - by dogs
sigāḷā - by jackals
vakā - by wolves
kimī - by worms
kākā - by crows
gijjhā - by vultures
ye ca aññe ca pāṇino - by other animals
santi - that may be around
khādanti - are eaten up

Those abandoned dead bodies lying in the cemetery are eaten by dogs, by jackals, by wolves, by worms, by crows, by vultures, and by any other beings that are around.

The stanza describes the process of disintegration a dead body undergoes if left in an open cemetery. In some countries in the ancient world dead bodies were thus discarded.

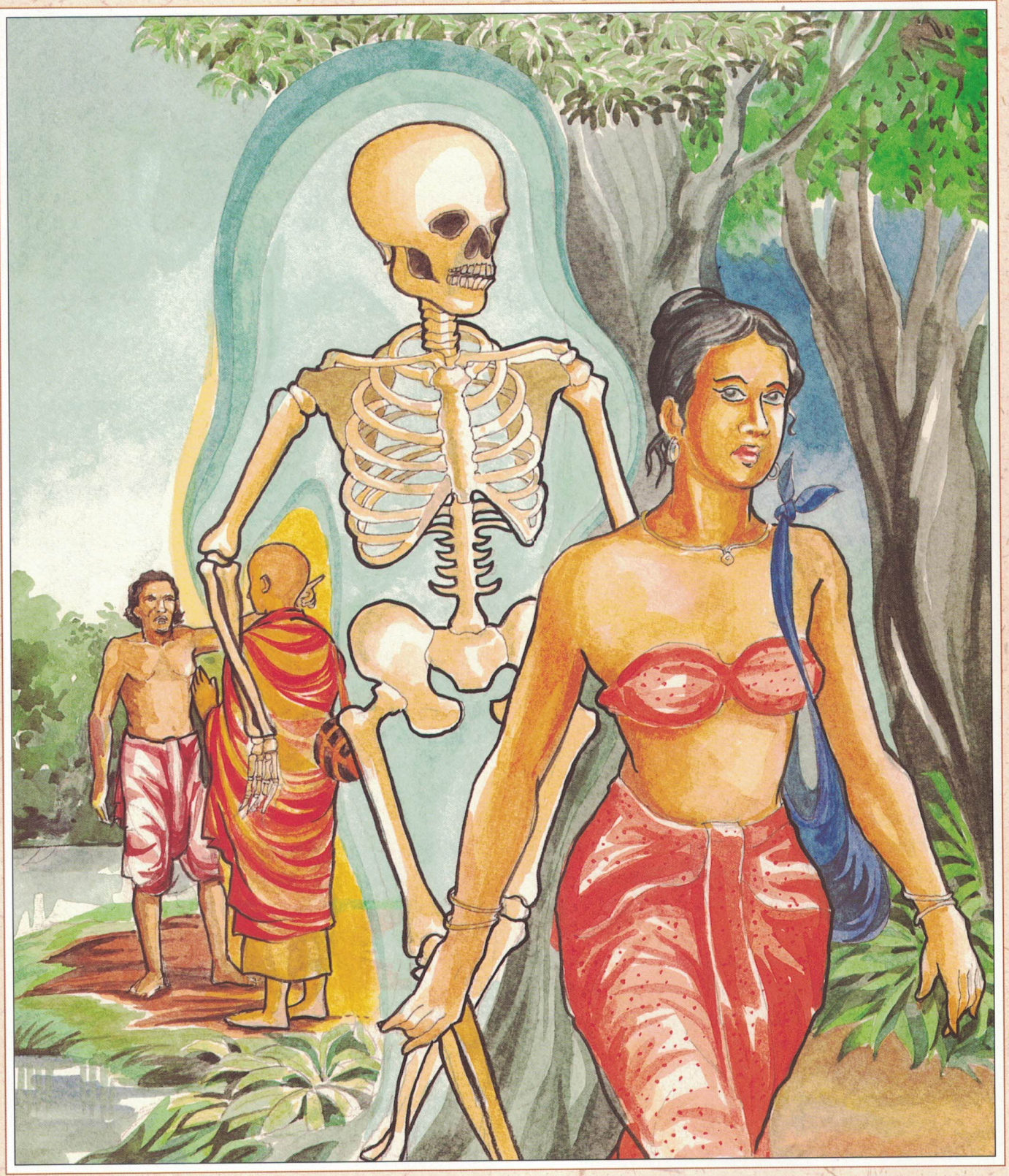
The revulsion of an individual seeing what happens to a dead body will make him disillusioned with life. A human body, looked after with such scrupulous care becomes, immediately upon death, a log of wood that is of no use to anyone. Even a log of wood has some use. It could help to kindle a fire, at least. But, a putrid dead body cannot be utilized at all for any practical purpose. In the modern world, dead bodies are not generally discarded that way, and as such, people will not be able to observe this process of disintegration. But, even today, a body bereft of life, if left alone, will undergo this process. As stated in this stanza, animals will begin to attack it, birds will prey upon it.

What is central to this concept is the fact that the contemplation of the disintegration of the body enables beings to see the futility of life. That sense of disillusionment will give the necessary impetus to utilize this disintegrating body for higher purposes - specifically to perform virtuous activities that will lead to Liberation.

The **Mahā Satipaṭṭhana Sutta** (The Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness) has indicated the importance of contemplating upon disintegrating bodies as an essential stage on the Path to the realization of Liberation.

In the Sri Lankan classical poem **"Lovada Sangarāva"** (Worldly welfare), beings are advised to realize that the body becomes putrid. In this didactic work, that awareness is asked to be utilized as an impetus to accumulate virtuous action.

"Why resort to enjoyment with this putrid body, which will be left behind? Listen to the preaching to reach the City of Release successfully."



Sutvāna Buddha vacanaṃ - Bhikkhu paññānavā idha
Sokho naṃparijānāti - Tathā bhutamhi passati

But in this world, an intelligent monk having heard the Buddha's Teaching understands the body and sees its real nature.

SUTVĀNA BUDDHA VACANAṂ

"He who delights in subduing (evil) thoughts, who meditates on loathsomeness (of the body), and who is ever mindful- it is he who will make an end (of craving). He will sever Māra's bond."

Sutvāna Buddha vacanaṃ
Bhikkhu paññānavā idha
Sokho naṃparijānāti
Tathā bhūtamhi passati

idha - in this Teaching
paññānavā - wise
bhikkhu - monk
Buddha vacanaṃ - the Words of the Buddha
sutvāna - listen
so kho - that monk
naṃ - the nature of that body
parijānāti - will know well
yathā bhūtamhi - in its exact nature
passati - he will see

If, in the Dispensation of the Buddha, a monk who is wise, were to listen to the Word of the Buddha, that particular bhikkhu (monk) will really understand the nature of the body as it really is.

What is the real nature of life? What is the condition of the body? These are the vital questions that have to be asked. But most worldlings do not get the right answers to these questions. Is it the right thing to deck the body and be impressed by external appearances? Or else, isn't it proper for us to embark upon a quest to discover what things exactly are? To begin such a quest the searcher, in this instance the monk, should be a wise person. Such a wise person who is a follower of the Teachings of the Buddha will take in the Buddha's Word wisely. That particular monk will be able to understand the real nature of the body, fully and comprehensively. Once he adopts this right view he will begin to see things in their proper perspective. He will not be deluded by mere appearances. He will see the body to be a conglomerate of impurities. He will come to see that the repulsive discharges that ooze from the body are only a very minute part of the internal composition of the body. Once he realizes fully what the real nature of the body is, he will no longer be tempted to get attached to it. He will be ready to use this impure, evanescent body to realize the Eternal Bliss.

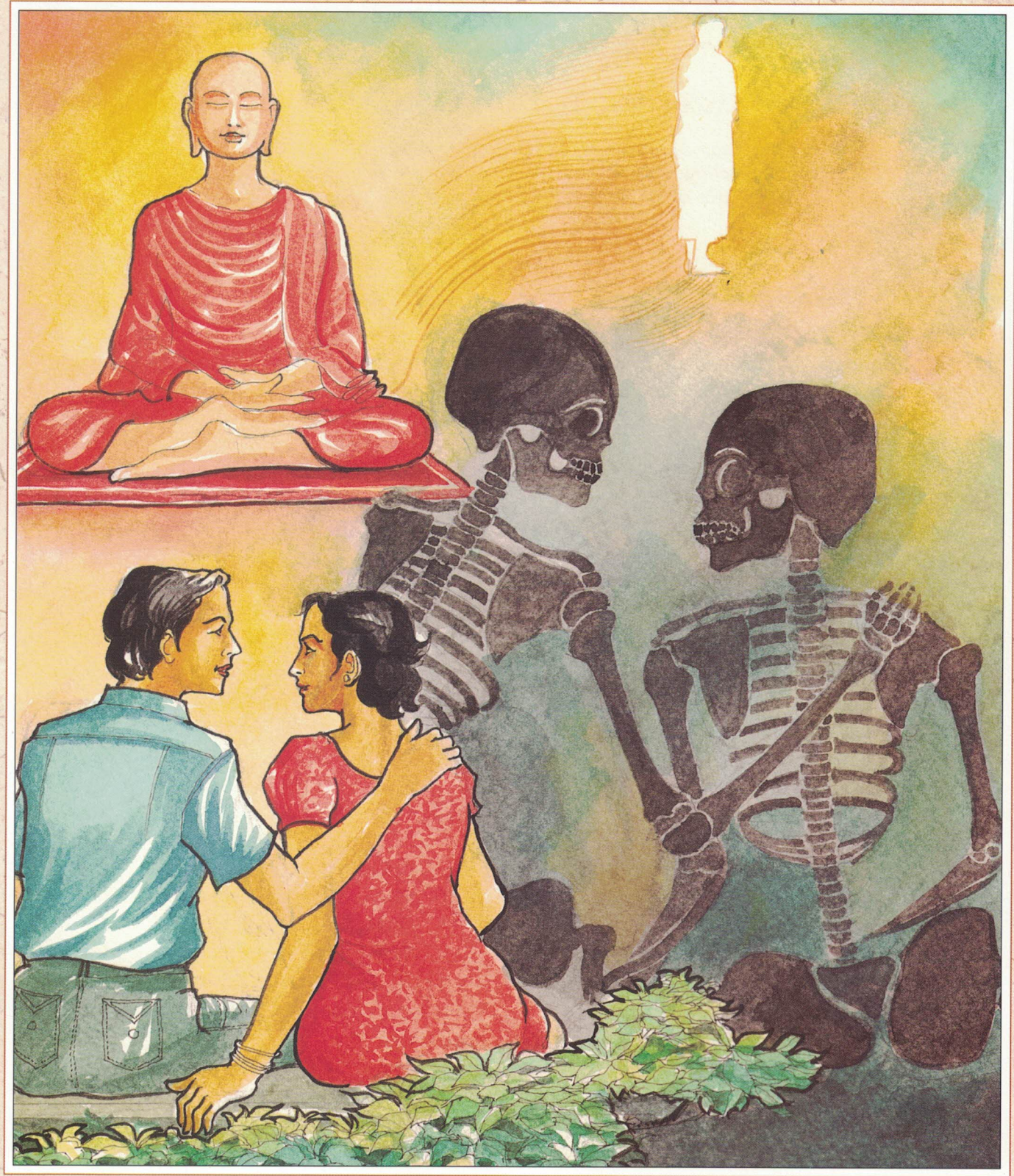
The essence of this stanza is to define the wise monks. If the monk is wise he will listen to the Word of the Buddha, and will begin to acquire the knowledge and vision according to reality (**Yathā bhūtaṃ ñāṇa dassana**). With that vision, he will realize the proper nature of reality. Such a meditator will unerringly perceive the nature of the body, for what it is. The wise bhikkhu is defined this way:

Cakkhunā saṃvaro sādhu
Sādhu sotena saṃvaro
Ghāṇena saṃvaro sādhu
Sādhu jivhāya saṃvaro

"Good is restraint in the eye; good is restraint in the ear; good is restraint in the nose; good is restraint in the tongue."

Kāyena saṃvaro sādhu
Sādhu vācāya saṃvaro
Manasā saṃvaro sādhu
Sādhu sabbattha saṃvaro
Sabbattha saṃvuto bhikkhu
Sabbadukkhā pamuccati

"Good is restraint in deed; good is restraint in speech; good is restraint in mind; good is restraint in everything. The bhikkhu, restrained at all points, is freed from sorrow."



Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ - Yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ
Ajjhattaṃ ca bahiddhā ca - Kāye chandaṃ virājaye

This (corpse) was once like you and you will be like this (corpse) some day.
Reflecting thus, you should dispel attachment for this body, internally and externally.

YATHĀ IDAṂ TATHĀ ETAṂ

"How should one reflect on the nature of the body through 'impurity'? When clothes and adornment become dirty they can be made clean again. Their purity can be renewed because their nature is pure. But the body is impure. Thus should one reflect on the nature of the body through 'impurity'."

Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ
Yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ
Ajjhattaṃ ca bahiddhā ca
Kāye chandaṃ virājaye

idam yathā - how this body is
etaṃ tathā - so that body too is
etaṃ yathā - how that body is
idaṃ tathā - so this body too is
ajjhattañca kāye - in one's own body
bahiddhā ca kāye - in an outsider's body
chandaṃ - attachment
virājaye - must be given up

Consider your own body. You are aware of its defects and shortcomings. You can now compare the body of another with yours. That body, too, has all the defects and impurities that your body has. That body is as full of defects and impurities as another's. Reflecting this way, one must cast away attachment to one's own body, or to another's.

You can be fully aware of the nature of your own body. You have personal awareness of what your body is like. You know the defects of your body. You are aware of the impurities of your own body. You also know the shortcomings of your body.

Now, turn your attention to the body of another. That body, too, is just like yours. It too has all the defects your body has. It has the same shortcomings. It is full of all the impurities that your body is full of. Therefore, you can reflect upon the fact that another's body is just like yours. This can be extended further. The body of another is similar to the body of a third party. Considered this way, all bodies are similar in terms of their defects, shortcomings and impurities.

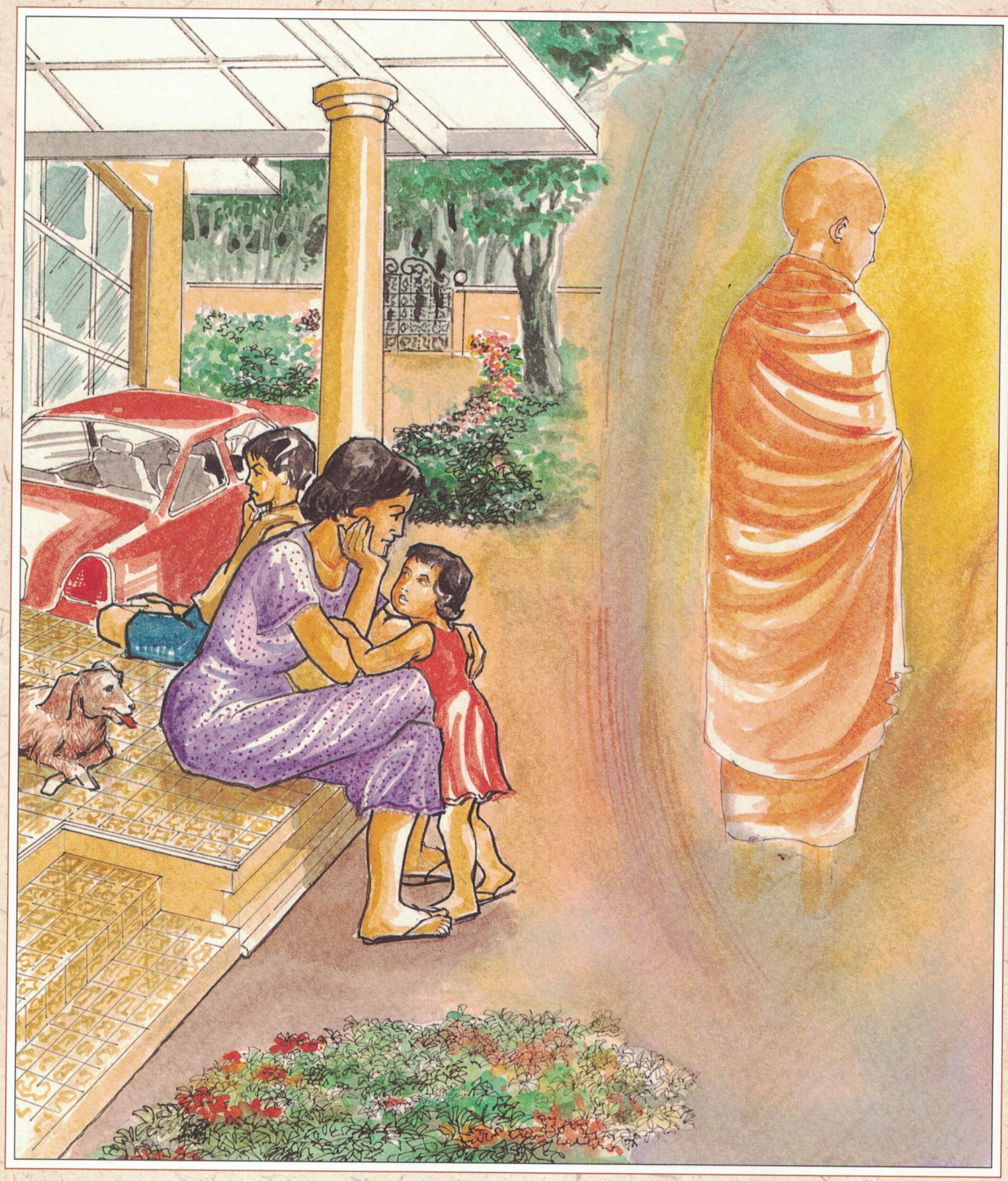
This leads to the conclusion that if all bodies are equally impure, attachment to any is futile. The stanza's implication is that all beings, if they are realistic, should learn to discard attachment to self and others.

In order to live this reality fully one must go beyond the intellect. As a cerebral exercise it may be possible for many to understand that the body is full of impurities.

But, what really matters is adapting that awareness to everyday living. For this, true wisdom is essential. It is easy for anyone to perceive the nature of life at an intellectual level. But, if one is really to see the truth of the body, one must obtain an insight vision of the disturbing nature of the body's impurities.

When the meditator fully realizes that all bodies are similar, several results ensue from that contemplation. Unnecessary pride falls off.

We beings should have a greater success of loving-kindness towards all, because we share equal physical properties. Then again, attachment to bodies also gets greatly reduced as you are aware of the real nature of all bodies.



Chanda rāga viratto so - Bhikkhu paññāna vā idha
Ajjhagā amataṃ santiṃ - Nibbāṇaṃ padamaccutaṃ

When in this world an intelligent monk dispels such attachment and passion, he attains the deathless peace, the changeless state of ***Nibbāṇa.***

CHANDA RĀGA VIRATTO SO

Viññanaṃ anidassanaṃ, anataṃ sabbatopabhaṃ; ettha āpo ca paṭhavi, tejo vāyo na gādhati, ettha dīghaṅ ca rassaṅ ca, anum thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ, ettha nāman ca rūpaṅ ca, asesaṃ uparujjhati;,Viññanassa nirodhena, etthetaṃ uparujjhati'ti.

*" Here (in **Nibbāṇa**) the four elements of solidity, fluidity, heat and motion have no place; the notions of length and breadth, the subtle and the gross, good and evil, name and form are altogether destroyed; neither this world nor the other, nor coming, nor going nor standing, neither death nor birth, nor sense-objects are to be found."*

Chanda rāga viratto so
Bhikkhu paññāna vā idha
Ajjhagā amataṃ santiṃ
Nibbāṇaṃ padamaccutaṃ

idha - in the Teaching of the Buddha
so paññāna vā bhikkhu - that wise monk
chanda rāga viratto - bereft of attachment
amataṃ - immortal
santiṃ - tranquil
accuta pada - the eternal
Nibbāna - the Bliss
ajjhagā - reached

In this Dispensation of the Buddha (according to what the Buddha has taught) the wise monk who is on a quest for truth, will give up attachment. Once he has been able to discard attachment, he will attain **Nibbāṇa** which has been described as eternally tranquil and blissful.

Most individuals are capable of intellectual appreciation of the true nature of life. They can intellectually visualize that life of beings is evanescent, and ephemeral and that everything is subject to decay and disintegration.

But it is only a wise monk, following the Teaching of the Buddha, who is capable of living this truth. He will give up attachment and passion. Through that pursuit he will attain **Nibbāṇa.**

Nibbāṇa is variously described. It is described as **amatam**. This implies deathless. In the state of **Nibbāṇa** there is neither arising, continuing, decay nor disintegration. It is also called "**santiṃ**" which implies tranquill ity. **Nibbāṇa** is also called blissful. It is also called **padaṃaccuta**. It is the wise monk who will attain it.

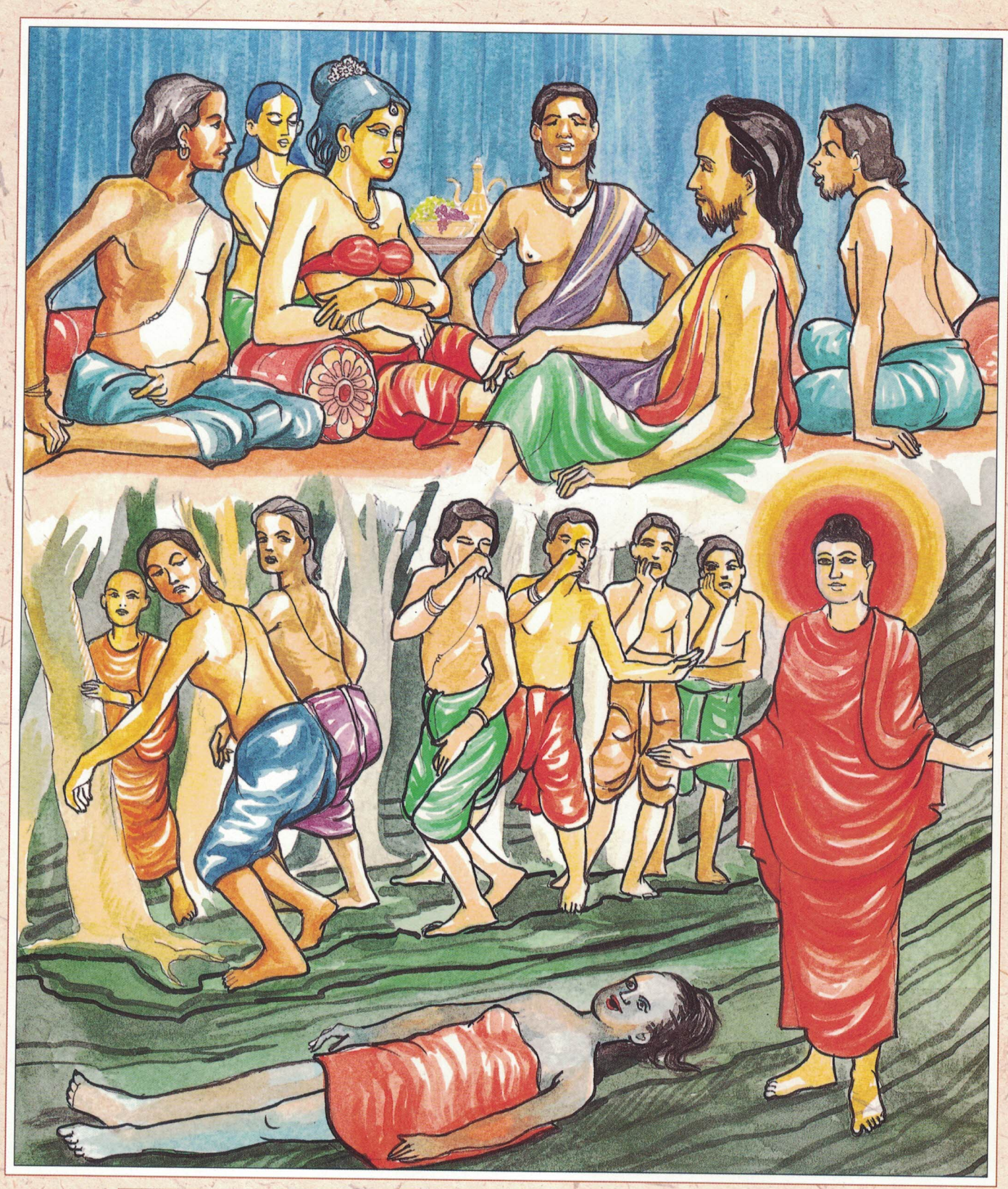
Nibbāṇa literally means freedom from craving-extinguishing desire (**nir-vāṇa**). **Nibbāṇa** is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist spiritual system. It is the total extinction of **rāga** (greed), **dōsa** (ill-will), and **mōha** (delusion).

Once these clingings to existence are given up, the being attains ultimate deliverance from rebirth, decay and death, and all forms of suffering those entail. This deliverance is in the future. Therefore, an individual who has attained **Nibbāṇa** will not be reborn.

Only a theoretical understanding of **Nibbāṇa** cannot reveal its true nature which has been described, at times, as the Unborn, the Unoriginated, the Uncreated and the Unformed.

This stanza sums up the achievement of the wise monk who has reached Liberation. In order to win **Nibbāṇa** he has broken asunder the shackles of attachment and sense-desires. **Nibbāṇa** has been defined this way.

Vision of **Nibbāṇa** is explained as follows: "If lust, anger and delusion are given up, man aims neither at his own ruin, nor at the ruin of others; nor at the ruin of both and he experiences no mental pain and grief. Thus is **Nibbāṇa** visible in this life, immediate, inviting, attractive and comprehensible to the wise.



Dipādako yaṃ asuci - Duggandho parihīrati
Nānākuṇapaparipūro - Vissavanto tato tato

This impure two-legged body, full of putrid substances and emitting a foul smell, wanders to and fro (in this world).

DIPĀDAKO YAṂ ASUCI

"Kiṃ te vakkalī imīnā pūtikāyna"

"Ven. Vakkali became a monk primarily because he was enamoured of the unparalleled physical presence of the Supreme Buddha. Seeing his obsession, the Buddha told him: 'Of what use is this impure body to you Vakkali?'"

Dipādako yaṃ asuci
Duggandho parihīrati
Nānākuṇapaparipūro
Vissavanto tato tato

asuci - impure
duggandho - bad smelling
nānā kuṇapaparipūro - full of a variety of impurities
tato tato - from various places
vissavanto - impurities oozing
dipādako - one with two feet
ayaṃ - this body
parihīrati - carries about

This body, held up by two feet, is impure and bad-smelling. It is full of a variety of filth. Waste matter oozes from various places in it.

If an individual were to realize the true nature of the body he or she will be able to get a proper perspective on human life. This stanza emphasizes that there is nothing in a human body that will make a person get intensely attached to it.

The story relating to the death of courtesan **Sirimā**, a renowned beauty of the Buddha's days, illustrates this point. She was the sister of Jivaka, the royal physician and the physician to the Buddha. She resided at Rajagaha, near the Jetavana Monastery. **Sirimā** was highly admired by kings, ministers, guild leaders and others at the upper levels of society. A young monk fell secretly in love with her. While this was happening **Sirimā** suddenly fell sick and passed away. The Buddha heard this news and asked King **Bimbisāra** to take her body to the cemetery and keep it there for three days, well protected without allowing animals and birds to attack it. The king did what the Buddha said.

On the third day the Buddha went to the cemetery, taking the Bhikkhus with Him. At this stage the body of beautiful **Sirimā** was badly decomposed and was extremely disgusting.

The king, too, arrived there with his retinue. When all the people were gathered there, the Buddha asked the king, "Great King, who is this woman?" "Venerable Sir, this is **Sirimā**, Jivaka's sister."

The Buddha asked the king to send word that anyone could have her for a thousand pieces of money. No one would take her. The king kept on bringing down the price and there was no one who would take her even for a penny. The king asked whether there was anyone who would have **Sirimā**'s body for nothing. There were no takers, even then.

The Buddha addressed the gathering: "Just consider in this very city men used to pay a thousand pieces (of money) for the privilege of spending one night with her. Now, there is no one who will take her even for nothing." The Buddha emphasized the real nature of the human body.

Etādisena kāyena - Yo maññe uṇṇametave
Paraṃ vā avajāneyya - Kimaññatra adassanā ti

What is it but blindness, that impels a person to plume oneself, or sneer at others for the sake of this body?

ETĀDISENA KĀYENA

Na paresaṃ vilomāni - Na paresaṃ katākataṃ
Attano'va avekkheyya - Katāni akatāni ca

"Let not one seek other's faults, things left done and undone by others, but one's own deeds done and undone."

Etādisena kāyena
Yo maññe uṇṇametave
Paraṃ vā avajāneyya
Kimaññatra adassanā ti

yo - someone
etādisena - of this type
kāyena - with a body
uṇṇametave - upholding one's own self
maññe - were to think
paraṃ - to others
avajāneyya va - insults
adassanā aññatra - lack of true vision
kim - what else

Beings possess bodies like these. They are impermanent and impure. With such a body they try to uphold themselves egotistically. If they think that way, and try to run down others and insult them, there is one reason for it. That is, their ignorance of reality. What else?

All beings should be aware of the nature of their body. If they are realistic they will know the truth about their bodies. They will then realize that their bodies are subject to decay and disintegration. They will also understand that their bodies are full of impurities.

With such a body someone may want to take pride in one's own self, and to uphold one's self. They will not stop at that. They will want to run down others. This is quite unrealistic. When they know what kind of body is theirs, why do they want to uphold one's own self and condemn others? Is there some reason for their behaviour? Is there an explanation to their egotism? There is one explanation. They behave that way because of their incapacity to see truth - to see things as they really are. What else?

Most people are egotistic. They can think only about themselves. In spite of the fact that most beings see their bodies to be impure, this attitude of upholding one's own self persists. If other people are also similar to you in everything, there is no need to run down others. It is absolutely unnecessary to find fault with others because they, too, are similar to yourself in every thing.

With all that rational explanation, people go on being egotistic - they continue to think low of others. What is the explanation for this behaviour? They behave that way only because they cannot realize the true nature of life and being.

This stanza sums up what has been said so far about the ephemeral and impure nature of the body. If we become totally absorbed in the transient and repulsive nature of this body, will a wise person ever think of using it for narrow purposes - to uphold one's self, and condemn another when both possess similar bodies? Essentially all human beings are alike. But, people in general are quick to see the faults of others, rather than of looking into their own selves.

To the Buddhist, all phenomena are consequences,
including all personal phenomena. However
pleasant or painful they may be, he does not regard
them as the rewards or punishments
dispensed by some Supreme Being.
He accepts them as the results of his own Kamma,
his own past actions, his own destiny,
in this and in future lives.
It is a religion for adults. For this very reason,
it does not appeal to those who lack mental maturity.
It is too free, too unsheltered.
But, to the mature, it is the only reasonable
and acceptable way of life.

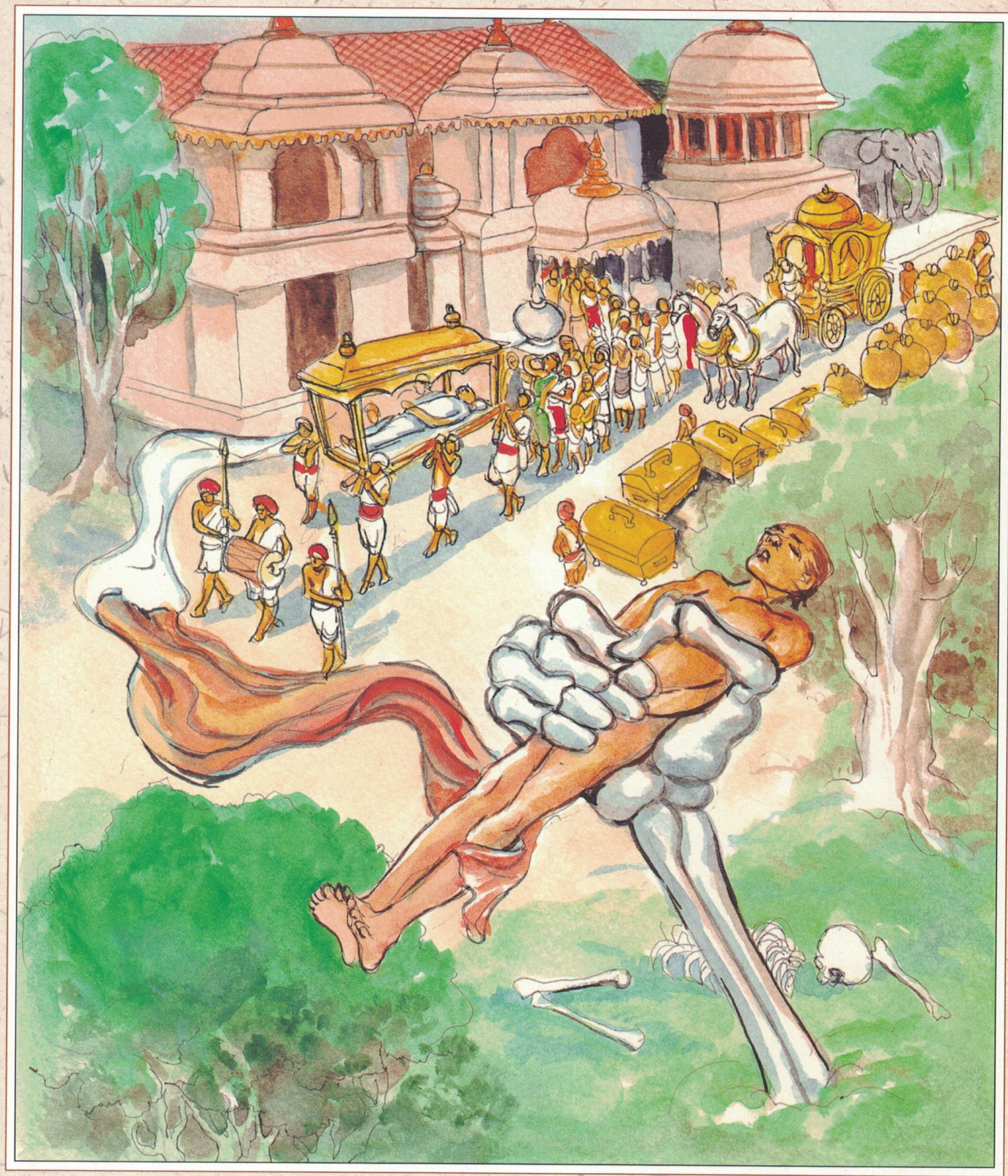
PIYEHI VIPPAYOGO DUKKHO

REFLECTION ON THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES

Separation from the loved is to be parted from
agreeable beings and formations.
Its characteristic is dissociation from desirable objects.
Its function is to arouse sorrow. It is manifested as loss.
It is suffering because it is a basis for the suffering of sorrow.

Hence this is said:

"The dart of sorrow wounds the heart
Of fools who from their wealth must part or of kin,
Which roughly should be grounds enough
For counting the loved lost as suffering"



Dhaññaṃ dhanaṃ rajataṃ jātarūpaṃ - Pariggahaṃ cāpi yadatthi kiñcī
Dāsā kammakarā pessā - Ye cassa anu jīvino
Sabbaṃ nādāya gantabbaṃ - Sabbaṃ nikkhippa gāminaṃ

Valued possessions, and whatever property there is, servants,
employees and all dependants, all these have to be left behind when going beyond.

DHAÑÑAṂ DHANAṂ RAJATAṂ JĀTARŪPAṂ

"Do not associate with those who are dear. In any case, never associate with those who are not dear. What is the reason for this? Not seeing who are dear is painful. Equally, seeing those who are not dear is also painful."

Dhaññaṃ dhanaṃ rajataṃ jātarūpaṃ
Pariggahaṃ cāpi yadatthi kiñcī
Dāsā kammakarā pessā
Ye cassa anu jīvino
Sabbaṃ nādāya gantabbaṃ
Sabbaṃ nikkhippa gāminaṃ

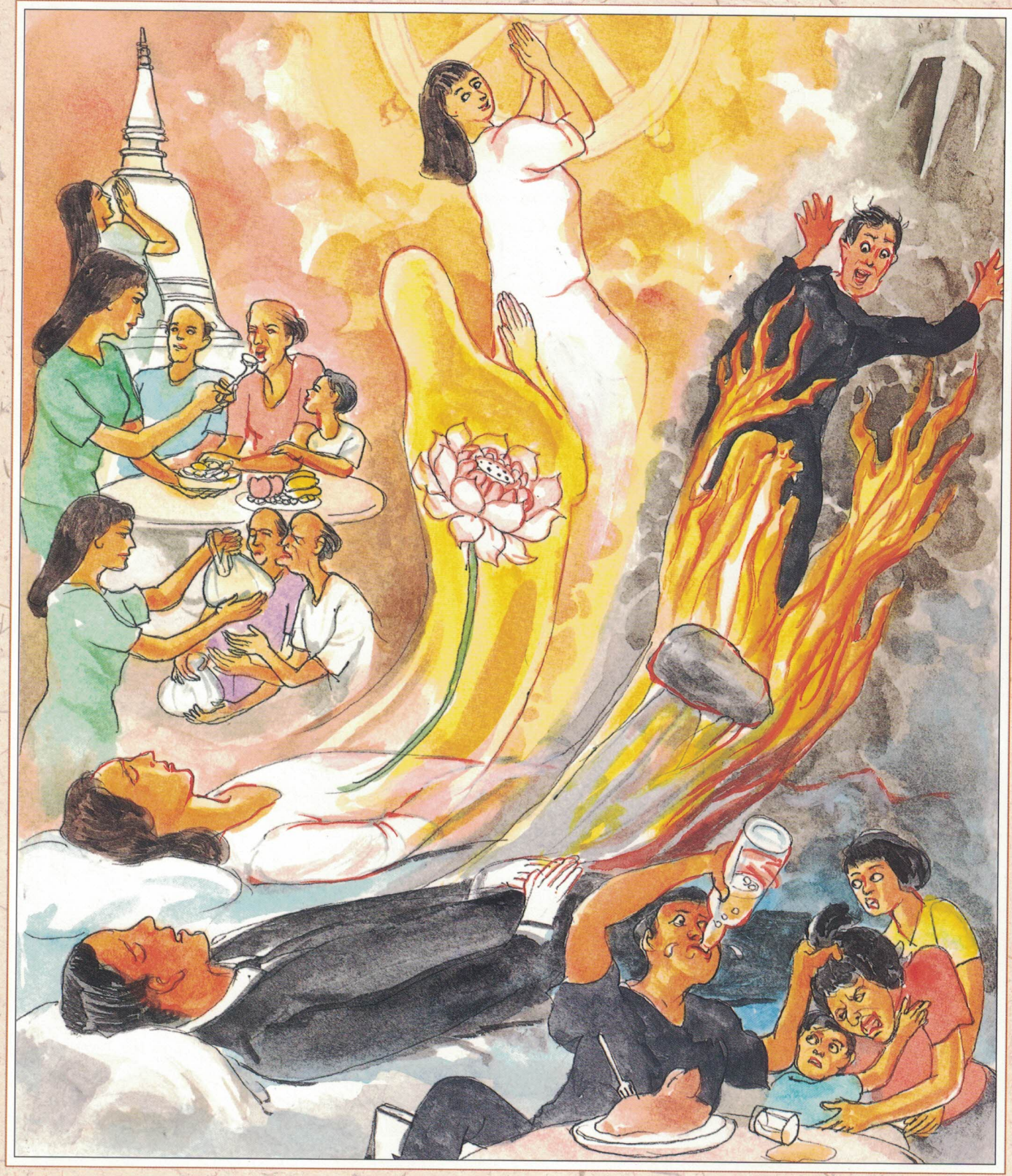
Dhaññaṃ - varieties of grains (like paddy and wheat)
dhanaṃ - wealth like land, houses, carriages
rajataṃ - silver
jātarūpaṃ - gold
pariggahaṃ ca api - possessions
yaṃ kiñcī atthi - whatever else there is
dāsā - servants
kammakarā - labourers
pessā - domestics
ye ca anujīvino - those dependants
assu - if there are any
sabbaṃ - all that
nādāya - without taking
gantabbaṃ - have to go
sabbaṃ - all that
nikkhippa gāminaṃ - have to depart - leave them behind

Human beings are destined to depart this world, leaving behind everything they cherished and hoarded while they were alive. During one's life time, people get attached to a vast variety of animate and inanimate objects. Some of these are essential for the conduct of life. But most other things are hoarded and cherished because of their excessive craving for possessions that extend their ego. They amass grains. They collect a vast wealth in houses, land, carriages etc. Gold and silver are avidly sought. They have also their dependants - wives and children. In addition, they have servants, domestics, labourers and helpers. The human beings get dominated by them. These possessions become even more important than their lives. Though they hold on to these acquisitions with such greed, what is the fate that they ultimately face? When they die they have to leave behind all these possessions. Not even a stray strand of thread can they take away with them into the next world.

When people die and their bodies are being taken to the cemetery, their wealth remains at home. Wives, children, friends, relations, servants, domestics and labourers remain behind. They have to depart without taking even a single little thing out of their vast possessions. All this makes us pose some questions:

> "What is the purpose of all this? Why do men and women grasp, grab and snatch everything they desire, when they have to leave this world with nothing?"

Beings, whether they are rich or poor, ugly or beautiful, foolish or learned, young or old, have to go away, leaving everything behind. They have to separate from loved ones. Those who held them in affection suffer separation when the person they liked is pitilessly wrenched away from their midst by Death. The Enlightened One, in the course of His definition of **Dukkha** (suffering), stated that separation from loved ones was a cause of suffering (**piyehi vippayogo dukkho**). In that phrase the universality of pangs of separation is supremely highlighted. No mere worldling can escape the chilling grip of separation.



Yañca karoti kāyena - Vācāya uda cetasā
Taṃhi tassa sakaṃ hoti - Tañca ādāya gacchati
Tañcassa anugaṃ hoti - Chāyāva anapāyini

But, whatever one does through deed, word or thought,
that alone belongs to him, that alone he takes with him,
and that alone follows him like his shadow.

YAÑCA KAROTI KĀYENA

"Mind is the forerunner of all states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves. Easy to do things that are hard and not beneficial to oneself, but very, very difficult, indeed, to do is that which is beneficial and good."

Yañca karoti kāyena
Vācāya uda cetasā
Taṃhi tassa sakaṃ hoti
Tañca ādāya gacchati
Tañcassa anugaṃ hoti
Chāyāva anapāyini

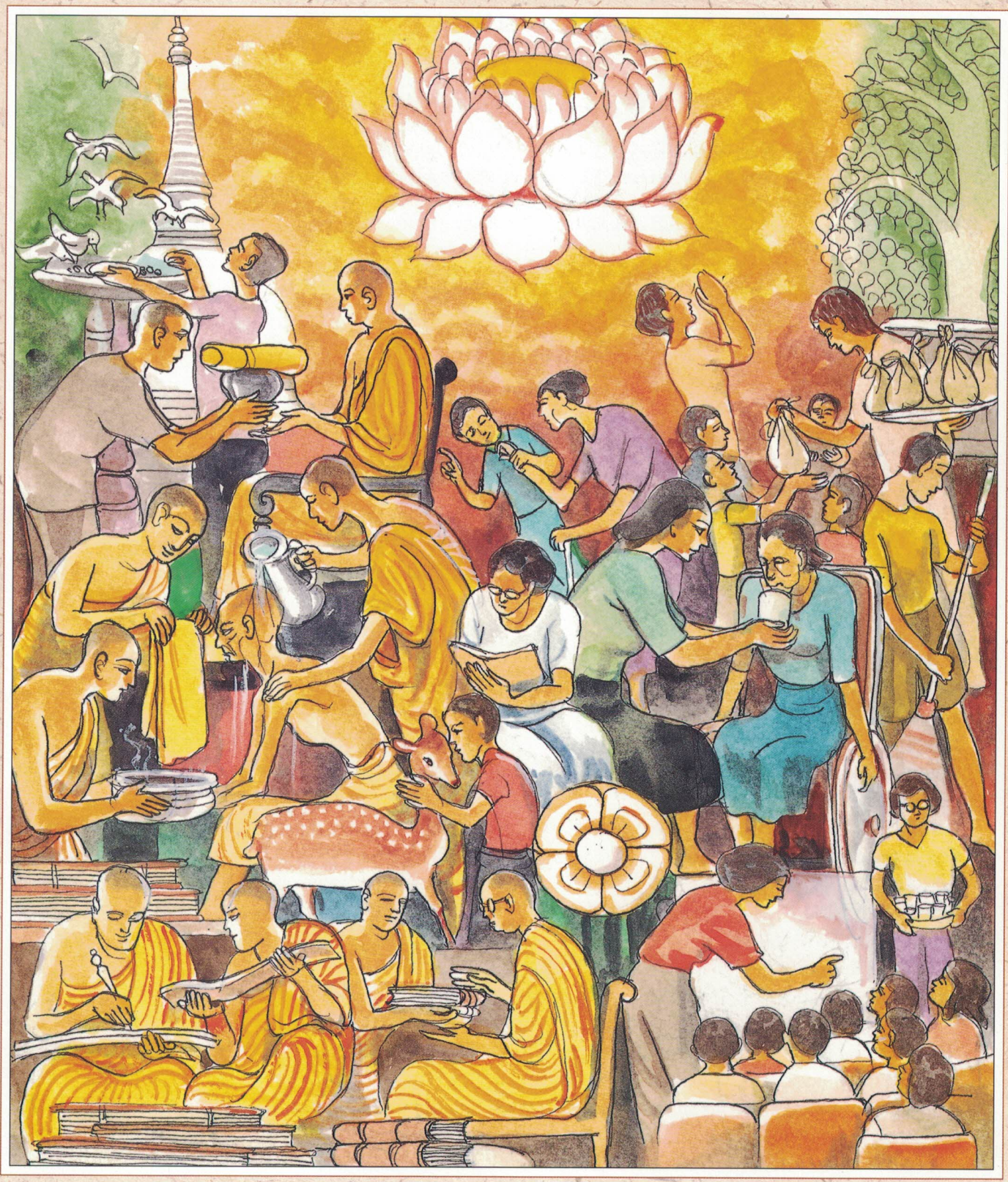
kāyena - by body
vācāya - by word
uda- again
cetasā - by mind
yañca - whatsoever act - virtuous or evil
karoti - is done
taṃhi - that act
sakaṃ - companion
hoti - will become
tañca - and that
ādāya gacchati - is taken along
tañ - that
cassa - him
anugaṃ hoti - will follow
chāyāva - the shadow
ana pāyini - that does not leave him

The material possessions amassed by a person during a life time are all left behind by the person who departs this life. Even his animate possessions are not taken away when he leaves life. A man may not take away any material possession. But there are some unseen possessions that he can take along with him. These possessions are the givers of material well-being in the life to come. These are the good deeds and bad deeds he has committed. The results of his actions during this life-time are his companions in his travel to the next birth. The condition of his rebirth will be determined by the good or bad actions he accumulated during this birth. These actions are both bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions. Bodily actions are those committed by hands and feet and other organs of the body. Verbal actions are those committed by word of mouth. Those actions done by thought are the mental actions. All these three forms of action could be either bad or good. Bad bodily actions are killing beings, hurting men and animals etc. Verbal actions are lying, slander etc. Bad mental actions are violent thoughts, such as the desire to destroy the welfare of others.

Then, there are the good bodily actions, good verbal actions and good mental actions. Good bodily actions are helping people, worshipping places and people of religion etc. Good verbal actions are giving profitable advice to people, speaking the truth, being pleasant in one's words etc. Good mental actions are thinking wholesome thoughts, cherishing spiritual notions, etc.

Both these categories of action accompany those who depart this world. If the action companion of the departing person is good, he will be taken along to a pleasant state where, in his next birth, he will be able to acquire more and more merit. If the companion a person has is evil, he will be taken to a woeful state - a bad birth.

These good and bad actions (**kamma**) accompany a departing individual like the shadow that will always be with an individual. These actions will never give up the doer. The wise person knows what steps he should take in this world to ensure a wholesome existence in his or her next birth.



All living beings die. Life ends in death. Beings fare according to their deeds, reaping the harvest of their deeds, meritorious or otherwise. Those who commit demeritorious deeds go to the woeful states and those who do meritorious deeds, attain blissful states. Therefore, let one always do good deeds for life's future store elsewhere. Meritorious deeds sustain life's own future.

SABBE SATTĀ MARISSANTI

"By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself, indeed, is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another."

Sabbe sattā marissanti
Maraṇantaṃ hi jīvitaṃ
Yathā kammaṃ gamissanti
Puñña pāpa phalūpagā
Nirayaṃ pāpakammantā
Puññakammā ca suggatiṃ
Tasmā kareyya kalyānaṃ
Nicayaṃ samparāyikaṃ
Puññāni paralokasmiṃ
Patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinaṃ ti.

sabbe sattā - all beings
marissaṇti - die
hi - because
jīvitaṃ - life
maraṇantaṃ - has death as its end
puñña pāpa phalūpagā - conducive to sin and merit
yathā kammaṃ - according to actions
gamissanti - they depart
pāpakammantaṃ - those who have done evil
nirayaṃ - go to woeful states
puññakammā - those who have done good
suggatiṃ ca - go to pleasant states
tasmā - therefore
nicayaṃ - fit to be amassed by those who wish welfare
samparāyikaṃ - that bring about good results in the next birth
kalyānaṃ- meritorious action; good deeds
kareyya - should do
puññāni - meritorious deeds
paralokasmiṃ - in the next birth
pāṇinaṃ- to beings
patiṭṭhā honti - stand in good stead; help

The inescapable universal law is that all living beings should die, sooner or later. What we know as life will end in death. Once beings pass away, they will reap in the next world what they sow in this existence. If they did virtuous deeds during this birth, they will acquire a wholesome existence in the next. On the other hand, if their conduct has been bad during this birth, they will find themselves in a woeful state in the next birth. Therefore, the future will be determined by the good or bad deeds of the present birth. Those who wish good things in the future births should ensure such results by doing good during this birth. The virtuous deeds done here will establish one securely in the future births. What is essential is that each person should acquire a package of virtue that will accompany one to the next birth. This concept has been profoundly emphasized in the Dhammapada stanza:

Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu
Yaṃ katvā anutappati
Yassa assumukho rodaṃ
Vipākaṃ paṭisevati

One must not do the kind of deed, having done which one repents, and will reap its evil fruits with a weeping face.

Tañca kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu
Yaṃ katvā nānutappati
Yassa patīto sumano
Vipākaṃ patīsevati

It is good to do those acts, the results of which can be reaped with a happy heart.

Whether the Westerner who first approaches
the Buddha's teachings be accustomed to
modern scientific or to Christian terminology,
he should always bear in mind that the Buddha was
not interested in the existence or non-existence of a
Supreme Being or any other abstract
philosophical proposition.
He was interested only in the Way, the practical way,
by which suffering may be ended, both here and hereafter.

Marie B. Byles (1900-1979)
Australian author and mountaineer

JĪVITAṂANIYATAṂ
MARAṆAṂNIYATAṂ

MEDITATION ON THE IMPERMANENCY OF LIFE

" Monks, the monk who develops mindfulness of death thus:
'It is great indeed if I were to live just long enough for me to breathe in,
attending to the Lord's teaching, surely much is done by me.'
These monks are said to be leading a life of vigilance;
developing keen mindfulness of death for the destruction of the ***āsavas****."*
The disciple who devotes himself to this meditation is always vigilant,
and takes no delight in phenomenal existence.
He gives up hankering after life; he censures evil doing.
He is free from craving as regards the requisites of life;
His perception of impermanence becomes established.
In consequence of these things he realizes the painful and
soulless nature of existence.
At the time of death he is devoid of fear, and remains mindful
and self possessed. If in this present life he fails to
*attain to deathlessness (****Nibbāṇa****),*
upon the dissolution of the body he is bound for a happy destiny.

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā - Uppāda vaya dhammino
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti - Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho

All component things are indeed transient. They are of the nature of arising and decaying. Having come into being, they cease to be. The cessation of this process is bliss.

ANICCĀ VATA SAṄKHĀRĀ

"Knowing that this body is like foam, and comprehending its mirage-nature, one should destroy the flower-shafts of sensual passions, and pass beyond the sight of the king of death (Māra)."

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā
Uppāda vaya dhammino
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti
Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho

saṅkhārā - all component things
vata - indeed
aniccā - impermanent - transient - ephemeral
uppāda - arising
vaya - decay
dhammino - have the nature of
uppajjitvā - having come into being
nirujjhanti - they cease to exist
tesaṃ - of that process
vūpa samo - cessation
sukho - is bliss

All the component things are transient, ephemeral, impermanent. This is unalterable. It is invariably and indeed so. The nature of these phenomena is to come into being, and to get disintegrated into decay. The ending - the ceasing - of this process is indeed bliss.

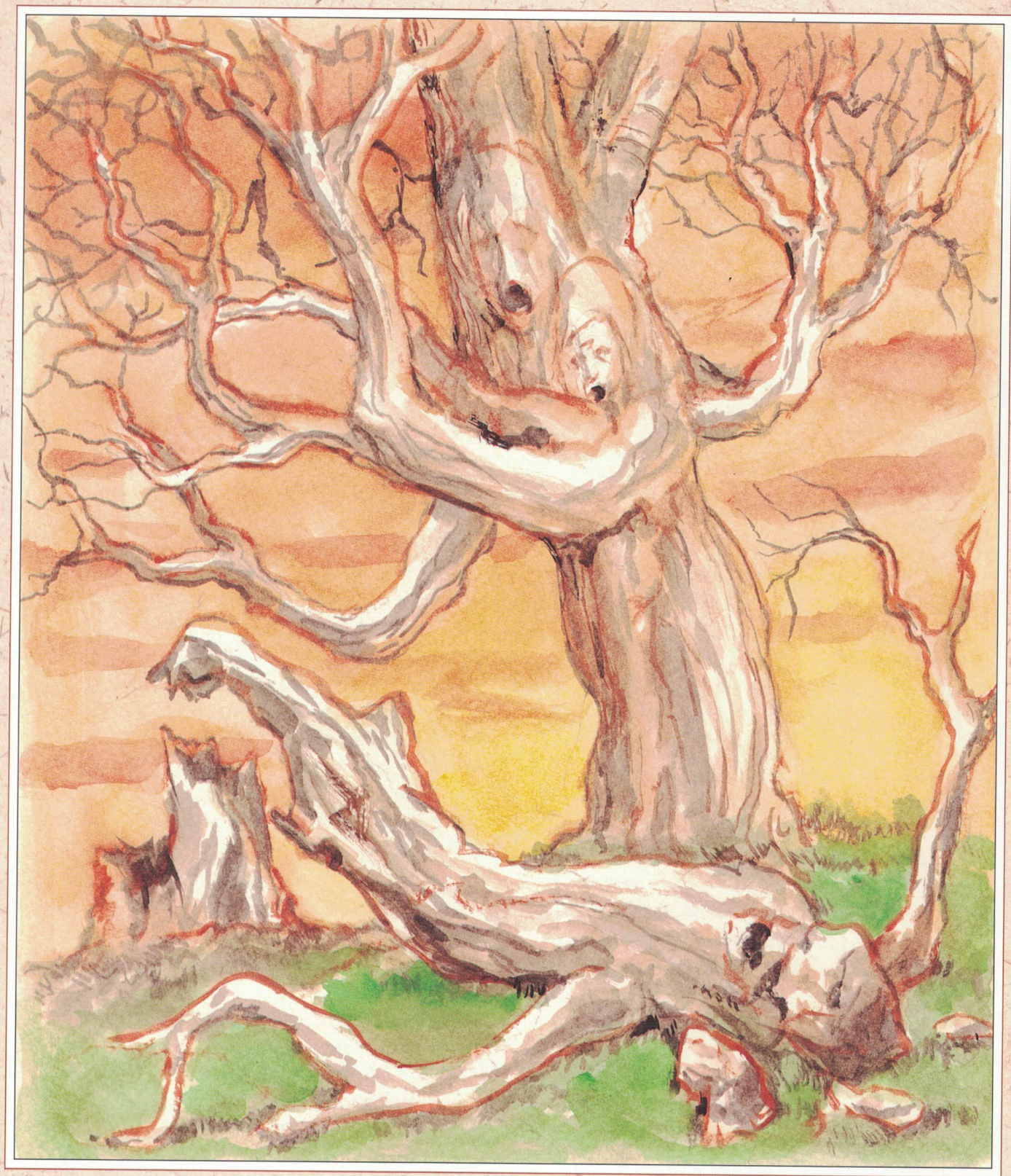
The word **saṅkhārā** refers to all formations. All formations - all component things - have the characteristic of being impermanent. Their nature is to arise and to decay. Any phenomenon that arises - that comes into being - that is born - will cease to exist. No animate or inanimate phenomenon is free from this fate. This law of arising, decaying and disintegrating is universally valid. The first line of this stanza '**Aniccā Vata Saṅkhārā**' (All formations are impermanent) is quite a popular formula used at Buddhist rites for those who have departed. This particular stanza has a capacity to console those who are bereaved.

It can universalize a specific personal sorrow at the passing of an intimate friend or relative. The experience of loss at the passing away of someone is universal. There are some who get so distracted by such a loss that their whole life gets disrupted. Such a state of profound disturbance does not help the person who has passed away, or those who are alive. If the universal presence of this experience is philosophical, realized through the idea expressed in this stanza, it will enable the persons concerned to face reality with a vast understanding.

In this stanza it is clearly stated that bliss comes by allaying this process of rising, decaying and disintegration. The allaying of this recurring process is the end-aim of all spiritual effort.

The process can be totally eradicated only by achieving the Liberation of eternal bliss (**Nibbāṇa**). As part of the phenomenal universe of **Saṅkhāra,** human beings are perpetually caught up in this process.

A deep spiritual awareness of this process, which gets endlessly repeated, is possible only through continued meditation and concentration.



Aciraṃ vatayaṃ kāyo - Paṭhaviṃ adhisessati
Chuddho apeta viññāno - Niratthaṃ va kaliṅgaraṃ

Before long this body will lie on the earth, abandoned and devoid of consciousness, useless as a log.

ACIRAṂ VATAYAṂ KĀYO

Death should be recollected by comparison in seven ways, that is to say: with those of great fame, with those of great merit, with those of great strength, with those of great supernormal power, with those of great understanding, with Pacceka Buddhas, with fully Enlightened Buddhas.

Aciraṃ vatayaṃ kāyo
Paṭhaviṃ adhisessati
Chuddho apeta viññāno
Niratthaṃ va kaliṅgaraṃ

ayaṃ kāyo - this body
vata - certainly, without any doubt
aciraṃ - before long
apeta viññāno - will be bereft of consciousness
chuddho - discarded, flung aside
iva - just like
niratthaṃ - purposeless
kaliṅgaraṃ - a decayed log
paṭhaviṃ - on the ground
adhi sessati - will lie

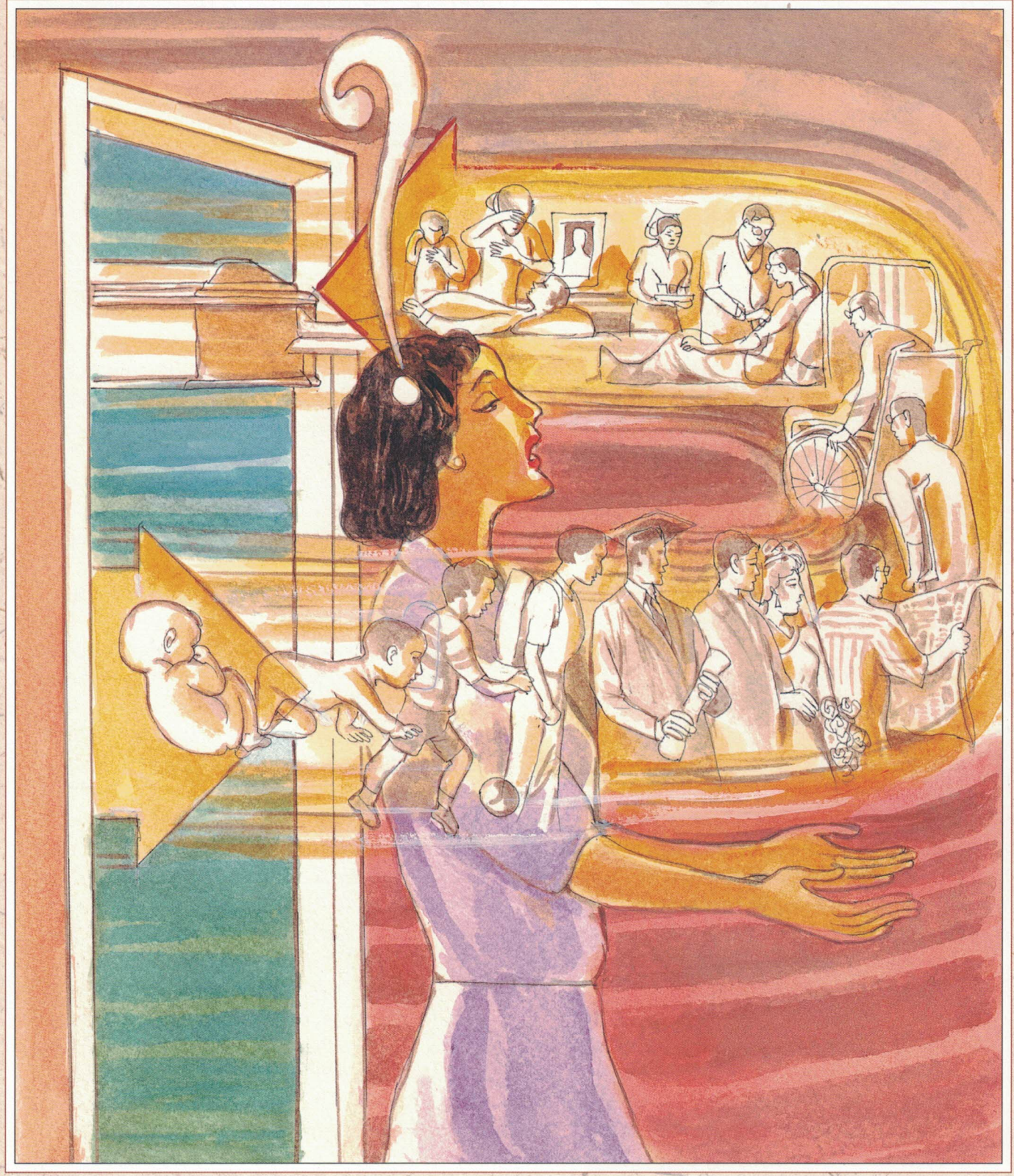
This stanza sums up the fate of all human beings. Human beings are alive and active. But these activities do not last long. The body that performed all these activities will be bereft of consciousness - bereft of life, before long. It will be discarded - flung aside, like a decayed useless log, and will lie on the ground.

This stanza emphasizes with drastic reality the fate of the human body. The body does not last long. This is primarily because the life span of most individuals does not exceed a hundred years. When consciousness leaves the body it becomes inactive. There is no difference between that body and a decayed log. The dead human body too will have the same fate as the decayed log. The human body too will be cast aside, just as people would throw away a useless, decayed log. What the Buddha implies by this is the need for human beings to make the best possible use of the human body while life lasts. The Buddha expressed these views about the ephemeral character of the human body, in relation to a monk named Tissa.

Once, the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana Monastery. At that time there was a monk by the name of Tissa who had obtained a meditation topic from the Buddha. Tissa was a diligent monk; he practised his meditation with great care and attention. While he was concentrating on his meditation he was afflicted with a serious illness. The monk's body was full of boils which became sores. The monk was in great discomfort. His body began to stink. His associates had called him '**Pūtigatta Tissa**'- 'Tissa of the stinking body'. His associates abandoned him.

The Buddha, when He surveyed the world, saw this afflicted monk Tissa and his potentiality to achieve Liberation. He washed the monk with warm water and got his robes washed too. Now, his body felt better. His mind was tranquil. The Buddha stood by monk Tissa's bed and preached this stanza to him. The monk contemplated the Buddha's Words. He knew that life would soon depart from his body. Once that happened, his body would be like a decayed log. A decayed log may still be useful to someone at least as fuel. But the human body, bereft of life, is in a way worse than the decayed log. The sick monk realized the true nature of his body and attained arahantship. Soon, consciousness left his decayed body.

This stanza was specifically spoken for the sick monk. But, it is the universal fate of all human bodies. Therefore, this stanza is for all human beings.



Anabbhito tato āga - Ananuññāto ito gato
Yathāgato tathāgato - Tattha kā paridevanā

Uninvited he has come hither; he has departed hence without approval.
Even as he came, just so he went. What lamentation then could there be?

ANABBHITO TATO ĀGA

"Life, person, pleasure, pain-just these alone - Join in one conscious moment that flicks by.
Ceased aggregates of those dead or alive - Are all alike, gone never to return.
No (world is) born if (consciousness is) not - Produced; when that is present, then it lives;
When consciousness dissolves, the world is dead: - The highest sense this concept will allow."

Anabbhito tato āga
Ananuññāto ito gato
Yathāgato tathāgato
Tattha kā paridevanā

tato - from there
anabbhito - uninvited
āga - (he) came
ito - from here
ananuññāto - without informing - without approval
gato - he has gone
yathā- whatever way
āgato - he came
tathā- in the same way
gato - he has gone
kā - what
paridevanā - for lamentation
tattha - in that kind of situation

This stanza makes an objective statement about the futility of lamenting over the dead. Beings tend to feel distraught at the death of their kith and kin - those who are near and dear to them. They weep and wail but to no avail. Such sorrowing can never bring them back to life.

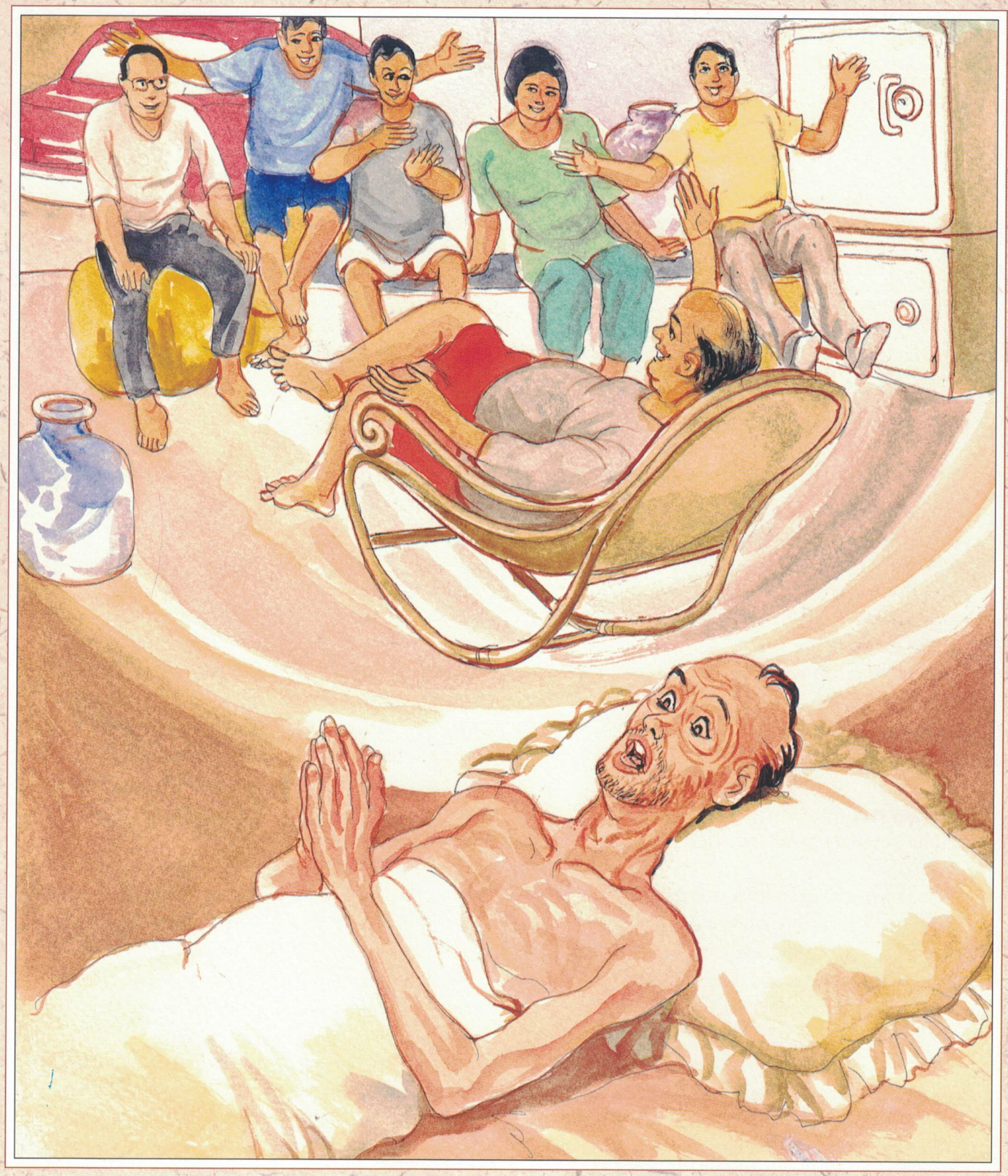
This stanza points out how this phenomenon could be looked at objectively. A being has passed away. The living did not want him to go. The living had established a whole series of links with the departed. The departed had been held in affection by many. But the departed had broken these bonds of love and affection, asunder, and was gone. Why should people lament at this situation? They have departed just as they came. When they arrived in this world, they came without taking anyone's permission. They left exactly as they came, without approval or permission. This stanza occurs in **Uraga Jātaka** (the Birth Tale). In this, the Buddha meets a householder who is grieving over the loss of his son. The Buddha tells him that in the earlier ages, wise people had a different attitude towards death. The Buddha narrated a story from one of His past births.

The Buddha, as Bodhisatta (Aspirant Buddha), was once born as a cultivator. He had two children - a son and a daughter. The son got married in due time. The family consisted of the parents, son and daughter, daughter-in-law, and their female slave. The son died suddenly of a snakebite. But, the members of the family, who had learned the true nature of life and death, took the event calmly. The Sakka chief of Gods, questioned them about their calmness.

Father replied: "Once a person quits his mortal frame, the laments of friends and relatives cannot touch the ashes of the dead. Therefore, why should I grieve?" Mother said: "He came here with no invitation. Without our permission he left us. He went away, just as he came. What is there to lament?"

Sister stated: "If I weep and lament, it will make my kith and kin more sorrowful. Weeping cannot bring him back to life." Wife said: "Crying for the dead is like a child's cry for the moon. My crying for him will not bring him back to life."

The slave said: "A broken pot cannot be put together however much one wept. Lamenting will not bring back a dead person." Sakka was pleased about their contemplation of Death, and about the spiritually advanced way they adopted towards the loss of life.



Puttā matthi dhanaṃ'atthi - Iti bālo vihaññati
Attā hi attano natthi - Kuto puttā kuto dhanaṃ

The narrow- minded person torments himself with the thought:-
'I have sons, I have wealth.' When he himself is not his own,
whence can there be sons or wealth?

PUTTĀ MATTHI DHANAṂ'ATTHI

'He gave with joy a hundred million - After conquering all the earth,
Till in the end his realm came down - To less than half a gallnuts worth.
Yet when his merit was used up - His body breathing its last breath,
The King Asoka too - Felt sorrow faced with death.'

Puttā matthi dhanaṃ'atthi
Iti bālo vihaññati
Attā hi attano natthi
Kuto puttā kuto dhanaṃ

puttā (me) matthi - (I) have sons
dhanaṃ' (me) atthi - (I) have wealth
iti - this way
bālo - the fool
vihaññati - worries
attā hi- one's own self
attano natthi - one does not have
puttā- sons
kuto - how can that be
dhanaṃ - wealth
kuto - how can that be

It is the natural tendency of most people to get into the habit of thinking 'I have sons; I have wealth.' They worry about these possessions. They are always worried about protecting these possessions of theirs.

About their sons they keep on worrying. How will they grow up? What kind of future will they have? How will they treat me when they are adults? He worries about his wealth as well. He thinks about the wealth he has amassed. He is thinking most of the time about ways and means of adding to it. He is worried lest someone should steal it. Or, if thieves might plunder it. Most of the time, he spends his days in that kind of worry. Is this reasonable? Is there any logic in these preoccupations? Not at all, says this stanza. It is foolish to worry about one's wealth and one's sons. They keep on worrying about these as they are their possessions. They try to have a control over these possessions. But, is this realistic? Not at all. It is logical to think about this issue this way. To be able to have a control over things outside yourself, you must first have some control over yourself. No human being can have any control over one's own self.

No one can prevent one's self from growing old- from decaying in body- from the weakening of the faculties and from one's hair turning grey. Then again, who is the person who can have a firm control over one's next birth? If this is the realistic situation, how can one have a control over others - one's offspring, one's wealth? No one can have any control over these things.

This situation is amply illustrated also by the following quotation:

> Everyone has three friends, children, his money, and his good deeds. When the time comes for him to leave the world he calls upon his children, who reply, "**Don't you know that no one can conquer death**?" Then he calls upon his money, saying, "Day and night I have worked for you, save me now." The money replies, **"Wealth cannot deliver you from death**." He next calls on his good deeds and they reply, "**Go in peace. By the time you arrive in the next world, we will be there before you to offer you help**."

All those that a person cherishes in his life abandon him, when the end comes. Ultimately, the only possession that will accompany him, is his good or bad **kamma.**

The individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. He looks upon individual existence as a sort of prison and wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole, the beginnings of cosmic religious feeling already appear in early stages of development-e.g. in many of the Psalms of David and in some of the Prophets. Buddhism, as we have learnt from the wonderful writings of Schopenhauer especially, contains much stronger elements of it.

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual and a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description....

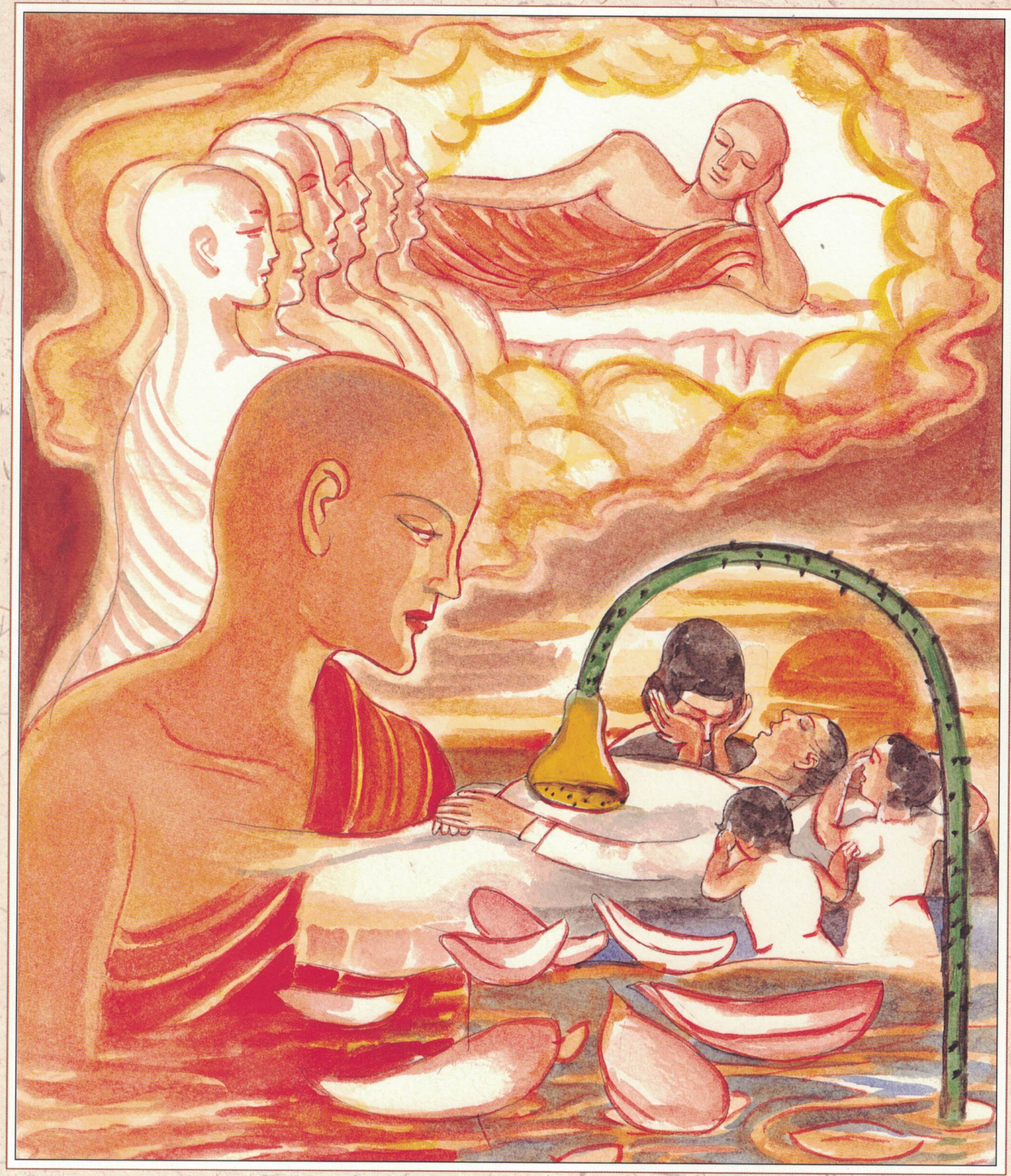
If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)
German physicist,
mathematician, winner of the Nobel Prize

TI-LAKKHANA

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF NATURE

The formula of Dependent Origination runs as follows:-
Conditioned by ignorance, activities arise.
Conditioned by activities, consciousness arises.
Conditioned by consciousness, mentality and corporeality arise.
Conditioned by mentality and corporeality, the six faculties arise.
Conditioned by the six faculties, contact arises.
Conditioned by contact, sensation arises.
Conditioned by sensation, craving arises.
Conditioned by craving, grasping arises.
Conditioned by grasping, becoming arises.
Conditioned by becoming, rebirth arises.
Conditioned by rebirth, old age and death arise.
This is the process that goes on and on ad infinitum.
Hence has it been said:
"Again and again the slow wits seek re-birth,
Again and again comes birth and dying comes,
Again and again men bear us to the grave."



Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esamaggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all component things are transient,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE SAṄKHĀRĀ ANICCĀTI

All phenomena have three characteristics. They are Anicca (impermanence) Dukkha (Suffering) and Anatta (soul-lessness). Anicca: Impermanency of things is the rising, passing and changing of things, or the disappearance of things that have become or arisen.

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti
Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
Esamaggo visuddhiyā

sabbe - all
saṅkhārā - component things
aniccā - are transient, ephemeral
iti yadā - when this
paññāya passati - is realized with insight
atha - then (when that happens)
dukkhe- from suffering
nibbindati - you get detached
esa - this is
visuddhiyā - to total freedom from blemishes (to **Nibbāṇa**)
maggo - the path

This stanza deals with one of the three primary characteristics of all phenomena. According to this, all phenomena are impermanent. All things get disintegrated. They are all transient and ephemeral. This characteristic of being impermanent is described as **Aniccā** - not firm, not stable. This is the first of the three characteristics of existence.

What is meant by the impermanency of things is the rising, passing and changing of things - or else, the disappearance of phenomena that have come into being, or have arisen. The characteristic of **Aniccā** (impermanence) is that phenomena never persist the same way. They keep on vanishing and dissolving from moment to moment. They are in an unceasing flux. People live with the actuality of impermanence, every day of their lives. It is experienced by all, each minute, each second. Sometimes, it is not possible to recognize it graphically as things change imperceptibly. But, some changes are very vividly seen. Impermanence is starkly seen when accidents occur, bringing about sudden death to some, and there is shocking awareness of impermanence.

There is nothing in any world that is not subject to change, and even in the inanimate phenomena impermanence is a reality. Nothing lasts for ever. Therefore, impermanence is an eternal, universal law.

In the Buddhist world even ordinary masses are familiar with the expression '**aniccā vata saṅkhārā**' - all component phenomena are impermanent. Although people meet the fact of impermanence everyday in their lives, they do not consider this universal law deeply. They become aware of it only at surface level. They do not contemplate the truth of impermanence. They view this universal phenomena of impermanence only as an intellectual exercise. Because of this, they cannot fully realize that impermanence brings along sorrow. If, as a result of this deep contemplation on impermanence, one can become aware of the sorrow that accompanies change and transience, that will open the path to purification.

To further emphasize the impermanence of phenomena, the Buddha spoke about certain objects that are taken by people to be permanent and eternal. He spoke about the future of the earth

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esamaggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all component things are transient,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE SAṄKHĀRĀ ANICCĀTI

"Impermancy of things as the rising, passing and changing of things or the disapperance of things that have become or arisen. The meaning is that these things never persist in the same way, but that they are vanishing and dissolving from moment to moment. Impermanence is a basic feature of all conditioned phenomena, be they material or mental, coarse or subtle, one's own or external."

and said that in ages to come, even the rocks and mountains will get burnt up. Even vast oceans will dry up, making them sandy tracks. What the Buddha wanted to achieve by this statement is to drive home to people that it is foolish to think of some things as permanent.

In His Discourse titled **Mahā Sudassana Sutta**, the Buddha indicated to Ven. Ananda the nature of impermanence. He narrated to Ven. Ananda the story of the exceptionally powerful ruler king **Mahā Sudassana**. This king led a fabulous life. He had all the glory and the fame he wanted. His wealth and his affluence were unprecedented. He had astounding cities under his sway. He possessed luxurious palaces. His armies of elephants, horses and chariots, and his comfortable carriages were all part of his royal life. But, what happened? All that disintegrated. This way, one can see the impermanency of all phenomena.

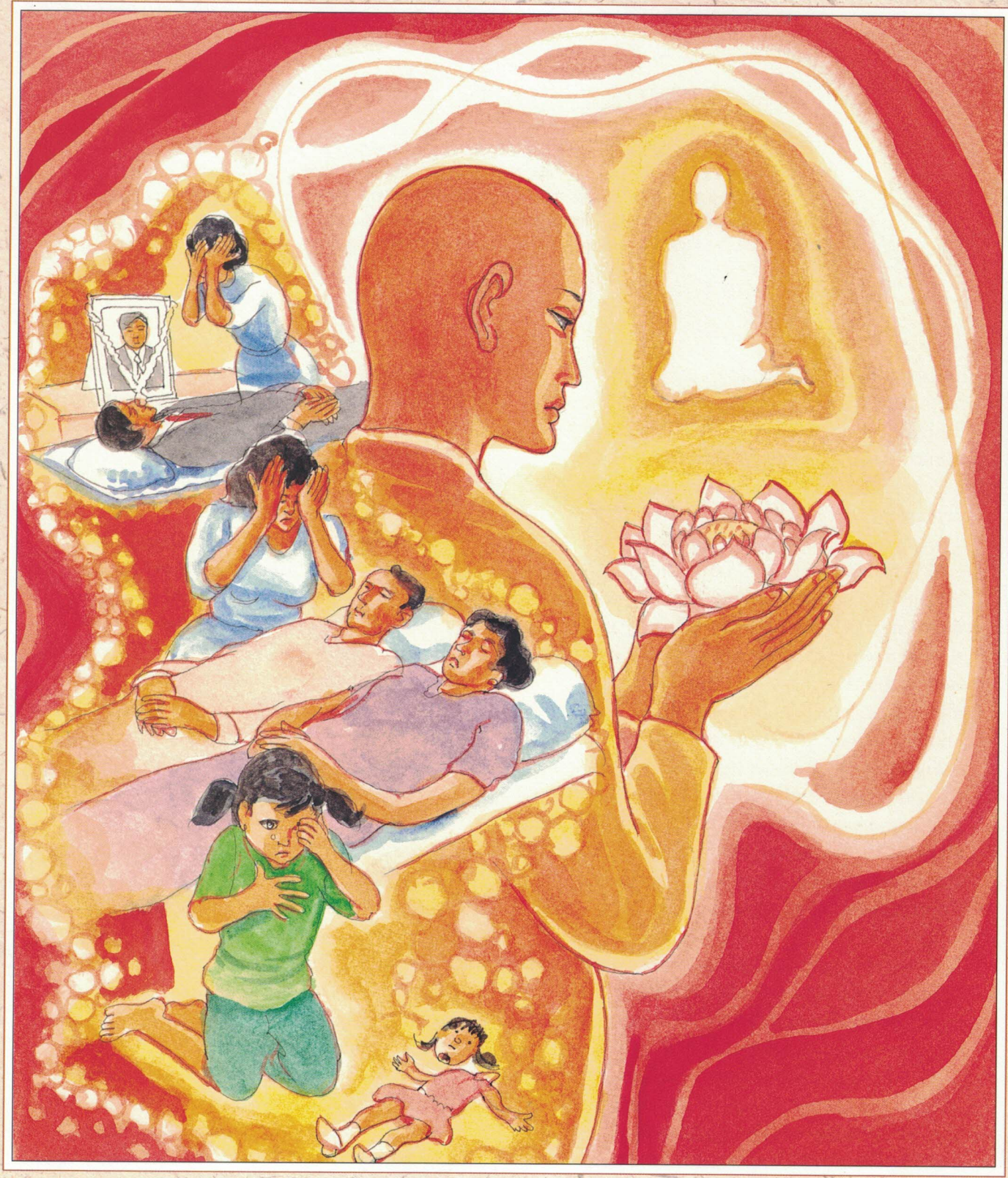
The fact of impermanence can be clearly seen in relation to the human body. A human being is a combination of several factors. All these component factors are impermanent. If human beings can contemplate this fact of impermanence, they will be able to achieve Liberation. This contemplation has to be done wisely (**paññāya**). This wise contemplation of the impermanence of phenomena is a form of meditation that has led many a monk towards the achievement of Liberation.

The Buddha assigned this contemplation of the Three Characteristics of all phenomena as a subject of meditation to five-hundred forest-dwelling monks who, however hard they tried, could not achieve much spiritual success.

The Buddha told these monks:

> **"All component things, all things that have been put together, all these things are transient, impermanent, non-constant. When this is realized through insight (paññā), one achieves detachment from suffering." This is the path to total Liberation. The total detachment from suffering which the yogāvacara (meditator) can achieve is described as Nibbāṇa."**

The impermanence of phenomena, can be seen only by those who are given to deep thinking. Even non-Buddhist thinkers have described the impermanence of things, although they were not able to categorize it among the three charateristics of the phenomenal world as the Buddha did. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, said that one could not step into the same river twice. When he said this, he was communicating the impermanence that dominates the world. Everything is in flux. Therefore nothing is permanent. This impermanence leads to disappointments, pangs and sorrow. What the Enlightened One advocated was that, a true awareness of this impermanence should be cultivated, so that beings would be able to obtain a clear view of the nature of reality.



Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esamaggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all component things are sorrowful,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE SANKHĀRĀ DUKKHĀTI

"Dukkha" is the first of the four Noble Truths, and the second of the three characteristics of existence. Usually, Dukkha is interpreted as suffering. But "dukkha" is not limited to painful existence only. Dukkha refers to the unsatisfactoriness of all phenomena and the general insecurity of all conditioned things.

Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti
Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
Esamaggo visuddhiyā

sabbe - all
saṅkhārā - component things
dukkhāti - are suffering
iti yadā - when this
paññāya passati - one realizes with insight
atha - then
dukkhe - from suffering
nibbandati - one gets detached
esa - this is
visuddhiyā - to total Liberation from blemishes
maggo- path

This stanza focuses on the second of the three characteristics of phenomena. It says: "All component things - all things that have been put together - are sorrow-fraught. When this is fully understood through deep wisdom (insight) one achieves detachment from suffering. This is the path to total Liberation.

Here, the second characteristic of phenomena is suffering (**dukkha**). In Buddhist thought the concept of suffering is very widely applied. Of the Four Noble Truths, suffering is the first. The original Pali word '**Dukkha**' is interpreted in a variety of ways. Generally, it is put into English as suffering and in some contexts, as 'unsatisfactoriness'.

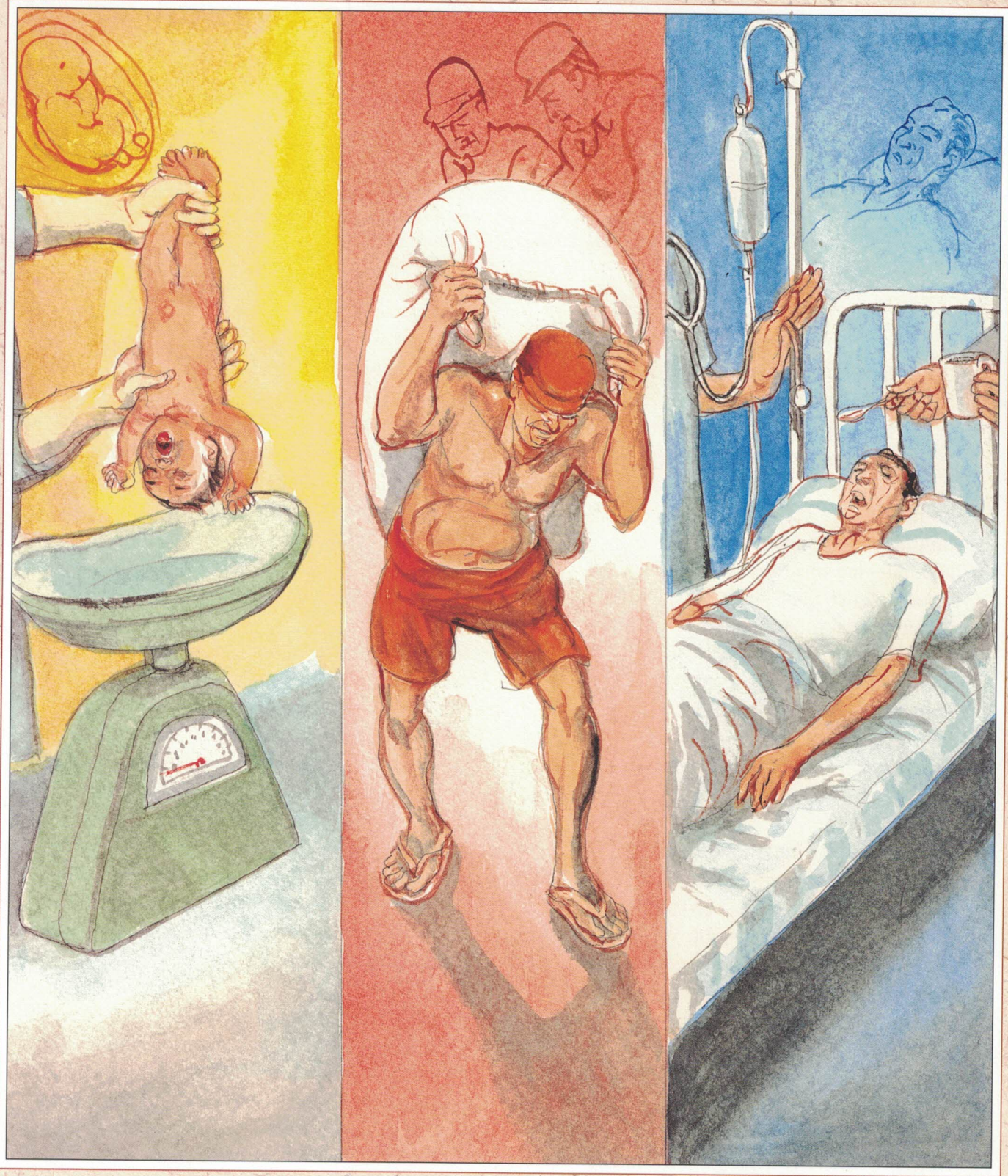
The Buddha has defined '**dukkha**' (suffering-unsatisfactoriness) in His First Sermon, the '**Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta**'. He interprets '**dukkha**' this way;

> "O Monks, this is the noble Truth of Suffering: 'Birth is suffering. Disease is suffering. Death is suffering. Being with those one dislikes is suffering. Separating from those one likes is suffering. In brief, all the Five Groups of Clinging are suffering."

The unsatisfactoriness (disharmony) of phenomena - the universal sense of suffering - is the Buddha's special discovery in the field of spiritual reality. All phenomena are transient, ephemeral, and impermanent. This transience of phenomena makes beings unhappy because they cling to things and concepts, thinking that they are forever. When they disintegrate, beings are unhappy. The totality of the universe is unsatisfactory because everything disintegrates. If something is transient it is unsatisfactory - it brings about suffering (**Yadā niccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ).**

Although suffering is a universal fact, most human beings shun what is unsatisfactory and get attracted to what gives happiness. They are enamoured of satisfactoriness - of happiness. '**Sukkha kāmo dukkha paṭikkūlo**.' (They like happiness and are repelled by suffering.)

The universal tendency of animate beings shunning '**dukkha**' (unsatisfactoriness) and getting attracted to what is satisfying (**sukha**) was first proclaimed as a human law by the Buddha 2,500 years ago.



Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esamaggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all component things are sorrowful,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE SAṄKHĀRĀ DUKKHĀTI

The state of suffering, painfulness, unpleasantness and the unsatisfactoriness of existence is Dukkha. There are three kinds of dukkha: 1). Suffering as pain, 2). suffering inherent in the formations and 3) suffering in change.

Pioneer psychologist of the 20th century Dr. Sigmund Freud formulated the same thought, in words almost identical to those of the Buddha. Dr. Freud said that the universal human tendency is to shun thoughts that are unpleasant, unhappy and unsatisfactory, and to cling to ideas that are conducive to happiness.

Some people tend to think that Buddhism overemphasizes suffering and therefore, the Teachings of the Buddha are pessimistic. But this is not at all so. The Buddha observed the universal phenomena objectively and found that all phenomena are impermanent. Clinging to impermanent phenomena, believing they are permanent, is the cause of suffering. It is found in the universe.

The Buddha's system is the most optimistic teaching in the whole of human history as He proclaimed a way of being with an end-result that never changes or fluctuates and, therefore, is the greatest form of happiness. This is **Nibbāṇa** - the eternal bliss.

Therefore, while diagnosing the state of the universe as unsatisfactory - as suffering - He prescribed permanent, unchanging, unfluctuating happiness, which is Liberation from the cycle of births. The Buddha advocated the path towards the state where there is no suffering. This way the Buddha provided beings with the greatest hope to eradicate suffering (**dukkha**) forever. In order to win the state of 'suffering-lessness' the Buddha instructed beings to view wisely and intelligently that all component - formations are suffering. The Buddha insisted that these phenomena of suffering should be viewed with deep insight, and not merely at surface level. Those who consider such matters only intellectually or cerebrally, will not be able to experience the real insight into the exact nature of suffering.

The central concept of Buddhism - which is the concept of the Four Noble Truths - has '**dukkha**' as its principal element. The Four Noble Truths are:

i) The Noble Truth of suffering (**Dukkha Sacca**)
ii) The Noble Truth of the cause of suffering (**Dukkha Samudaya Sacca**)
iii) The Noble Truth of the eradication of suffering (**Dukkha Nirodha Sacca**)
iv) The Noble Truth of the path to the eradication of suffering (**Dukkha Nirodha Gāminī Paṭipadā Sacca**)

The first three of these four are a process of insightful understanding. The fourth Noble Truth is a pragmatic commitment to the eradication of suffering, built on the understanding through deep insight.

Therefore, the path to the achievement of Liberation is the understanding with insight that all phenomena are unsatisfactory and are conducive to suffering.

Sabbe dhammā anattā ti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esa maggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all Dhammas, all phenomena, are soulless,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE DHAMMĀ ANATTĀ TI

"Sufferring exists, but no sufferer is found.
Doing exists, but no doer is there.
Nibbāṇa is, but not the person who enters it.
There is the path, but no traveller on it is seen."

Sabbe dhammā anattā ti
Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
Esa maggo visuddhiyā

sabbe - all
dhammā - states of being
anattā - without a self
iti yadā - when this
paññāya passati - one realizes with insight
atha - then
dukkhe - from suffering
nibbindati - (one) gets detached
esa - this is
visuddhiyā - to total Liberation
maggo - the path

This stanza deals with the third of the Three Characteristics (**Ti - Lakkhaṇa**) of phenomena. This third characteristic is referred to as '**anatta**' (soullessness or without a self). According to this, if one were to realize with deep insight that all phenomena in the universe are soulless it helps a person to eradicate suffering. This is the path to total purification.

Anatta (soullessness) implies the lack of a soul, or a permanent and abiding soul, or else the lack of an '**ātman**' that is eternal. This concept of **anattā** is extremely difficult for most individuals to comprehend fully.

The sum total of the Doctrine of change as was expounded by the Buddha is as follows:

> "The component things that have a conditioned existence are a process, and not a group of abiding entities. In these component things, the processes of change take place in such rapid succession, that people tend to regard mind and body as static, permanent phenomena. They do not see that they arise and break up unceasingly. Because of this failure to see them as processes, they regard these phenomena unitarily, see them as a solid lump, or as a whole. Because they seem solid most people tend to take them as unchanging souls - permanent souls - or as self."

The ordinary worldling considers body as self. They cling to the notion 'I am' in spite of the fact that the body keeps on changing rapidly. People are accustomed to the idea of thinking of themselves as possessing their own body and mind. They look at others too as separate bodies and minds. Therefore, it is quite difficult for people to get attuned to the notion that all these processes are without any solid centre to them.

As long as people fail to see phenomena as only processes - as ceaseless movements - they will not be able to come to terms satisfactorily with the notion of **anattā** (soullessness). They keep on asking such questions as these: "Is there no permanent soul? If there is no such persisting entity - no permanent soul or an abiding self - what is it

Sabbe dhammā anattā ti - Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - Esa maggo visuddhiyā

When one sees with wisdom that all Dhammas, all phenomena, are soulless,
he overcomes misery. This is the path to purity.

SABBE DHAMMĀ ANATTĀ TI

Anattā is a specific Buddhist doctrine - Anattā signifies non-self, non-ego, egolessness, impersonality. The Anattā doctrine teaches that neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside them can be found anything that could be really considered an ego -entity.

that experiences the results of actions, both here and hereafter?"

"Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found. The deeds are, but no doer of the deeds is there. **Nibbāṇa** is there, but not the man that enters it. The Path is, but no traveller on it seen."

The concept of 'no-self' (soullessness) is the central Doctrine of Buddhism. **Anatta** is a specific Buddhist Doctrine. **Anatta** Doctrine has been clearly and unreservedly taught only by the Buddha. For this reason the Buddha is known as '**Anatta-vādi**' - the exponent of the Doctrine of no-self.

In the two previous stanzas, discussions of the first two of the Three Characteristics (**Ti Lakkhaṇa**), **Anicca** (impermanence) and **Dukkha** (suffering) were taken up. In these two, the word referred to phenomena is '**Saṅkhāra**' (compounded things). But, in the instance of **Anatta** the word used for phenomena is 'dhamma' (entities).

The prevailing view is that the Doctrine of **Anatta** is applicable even to **Nibbāṇa**. Even the achievement of **Nibbāṇa** is an impersonal process. No component entity enters **Nibbāṇa**. It is **anatta** - non-personal. The implication of this usage is that there is no ego or no personality that experiences the suffering. In the same way, it is not one's ego or one's personality that performs good or bad actions, and that will be reborn according to the actions performed. And above all, the implication of this Doctrine is that it is not anyone's ego or personality that enters **Nibbāṇa**. In all these Three Characteristics what really matters is the wise understanding of these '**Ti Lakkhaṇa**'. It is specifically said in all these three stanzas that these characteristics should be 'seen with insight' - not merely at the surface level of intellectual understanding.

What is the end-effect of seeing these characteristics with deep insight? The primary purpose is to achieve the path of purity (**Maggo Visuddhiyā**). **Visuddhi** is purification. Seven kinds of purification are mentioned in the Buddhist Scripture, thus:

i) The Purification of Morality (**Sīla Visuddhi**)
ii) The Purification of Mind (**Citta Visuddhi**)
iii) The Purification of View (**Diṭṭhi Visuddhi**)
iv) The Purification by Overcoming Doubt (**Kankhā Vitarana Visuddhi**)
v) The Purification by Knowledge and Vision of what is Path and Non-Path (**Maggāmagga Ñānadassana Visuddhi**)
vi) The Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Path-Progress (**Paṭipadā Ñānadassana Visuddhi**)
vii) The Purification of Knowledge and Vision (**Ñānadassana Visuddhi**).

If a wise man were asked,
" What would you do if you were offered dictatorship
over all the earth" he would answer,
" Refuse it of course." For the wise do not seek power,
nor are they impressed by it.
And yet how many of us are wise? We seek power, imagining
that it is the key to happiness. We strive for power, and if we
happen to get it, we generally abuse it.

LOKA DHAMMA

WORLDLY CONDITIONS

"ALAS! YOUTH ENDS WITH OLD AGE"

"ALAS! GREAT FORTUNES END WITH DESTRUCTION"

"ALAS! MEETINGS END WITH SEPARATION"

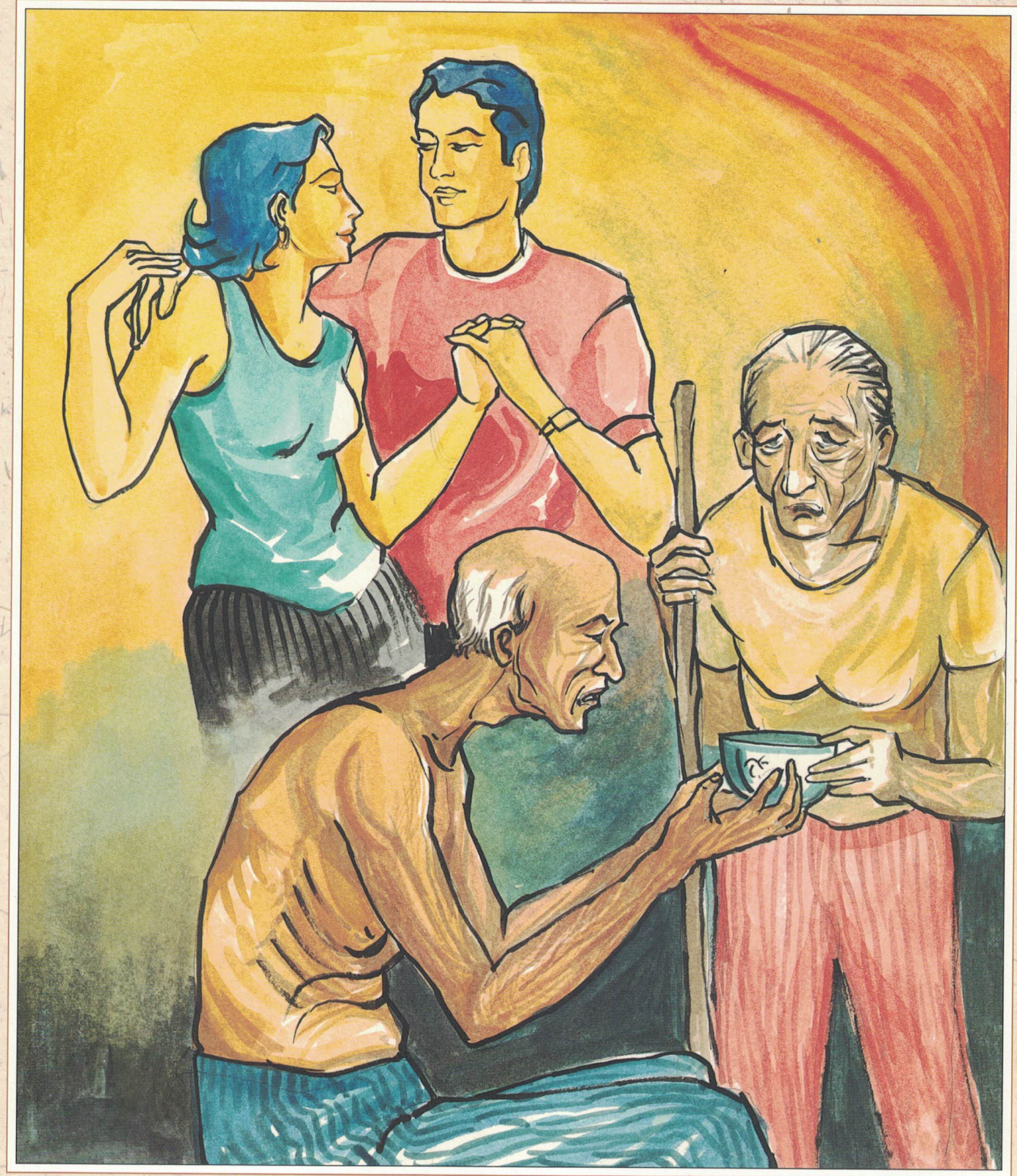
"ALAS! THE LIVING ENDS WITH DEATH"

"ALAS! RISE ENDS WITH FALL"

"ALAS! PLEASURE ENDS WITH SORROW"

"ALAS! PRAISE ENDS WITH DISGRACE"

"ALAS! HAPPINESS ENDS WITH SORROW"



HĀ! YOBBANĀ JARĀ ANTĀ

"ALAS! YOUTH ENDS WITH OLD AGE"

People take great care to keep their youth in proper trim.
But relentlessly, old age comes and steals the well-tended youth.

HĀ! YOBBANĀ JARĀ ANTĀ

The youthful sense of freedom begins to get inhibited bit by bit.
Old age is not very far away. The youth is now very far behind.
The carefully tended body is now wearisome. Wrinkles appear on the body that was once a proud possession. Aches and pains remind one of the years that have accumulated.
The shadows lengthen. Evening is fast merging into a darker night.
Alas, the radiant youth ends in this decrepit old age.

The idea here is to make the worldly beings see what youth actually means. Youth is universally considered the time of joy. It is the spring of life. Everything is fresh in the eyes of youth. The world is just beginning for the young. The youthful urge is to be active, playful, express the vast energy stored within youth. The young are keen to change everything. They see the whole world as a place which needs to be reorganized. Youth is the age of love and romance. To the young the world seems a playground.

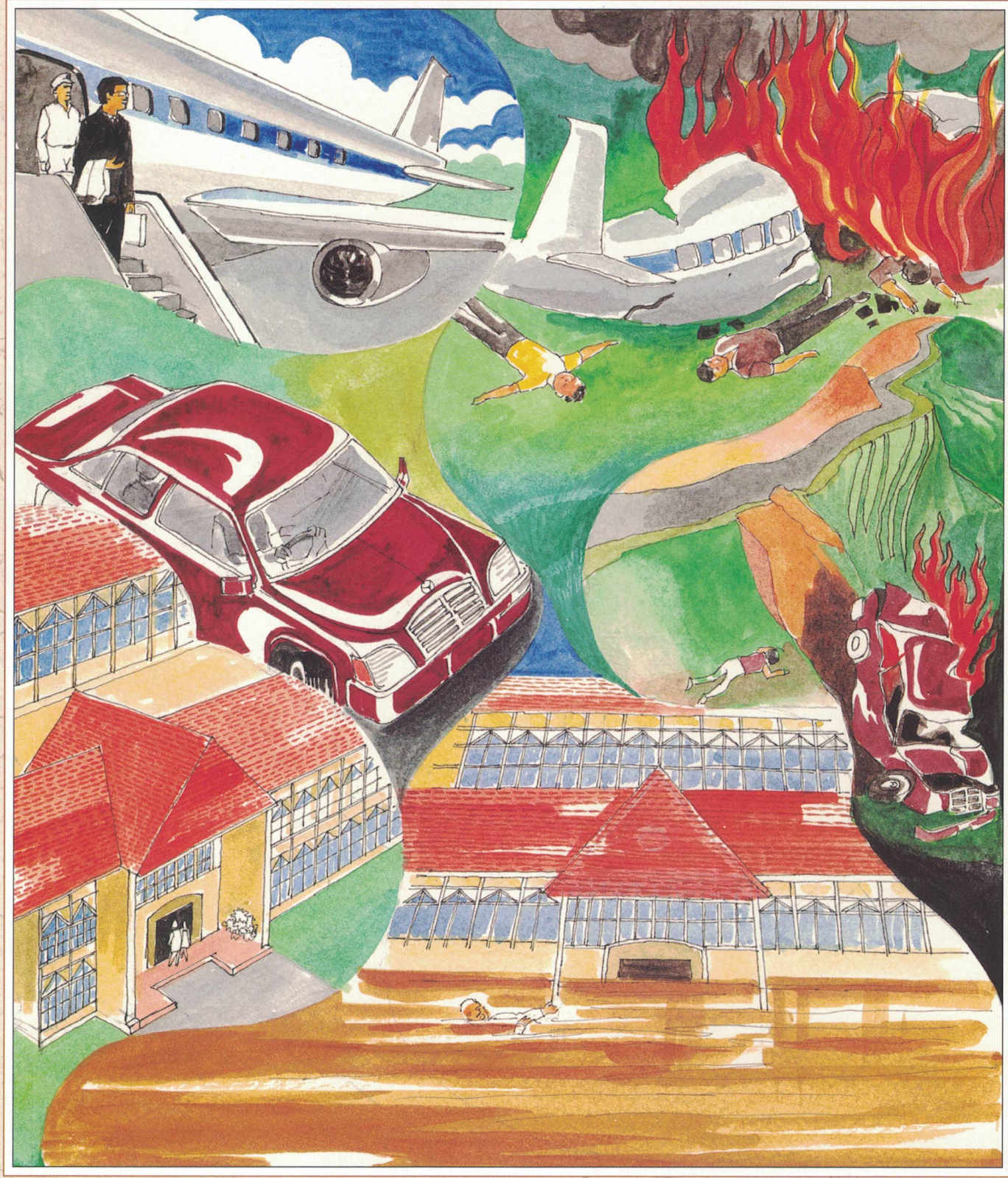
They see opportunity everywhere for future development. The youth are idealists. They are keen to build the world afresh in their image. To them what the previous generation has done is, for the most part, ridiculous and meaningless. The parents seem to be old fashioned. They seem to possess conservative values. The young are puzzled why the older generation does not take active, reformistic, even revolutionary, steps to set the world right.

The youth are of the view that their mission is to reconstruct the whole world - the total human society. Youth is also the time of play, of games and of sports. The energy the youth experience within them is given vent to through play. They are the generation that takes to active sports. Youth, of course, is also the age of knowledge. The young feel the need to learn and take in everything they can. They are the generation of questioners. They keep on asking questions. They are keen to know how things began. It is their foremost wish, in most instances, to unravel the mysteries of life and the world.In appearance the youth are radiant, beautiful and charming. In consequence most young people tend to focus a good amount of attention to how they look. They take pride in their complexion, in their well-proportioned limbs. They tend their physical beauty with considerable care. They are partial to good clothes - stylistic living. They are the generation attuned to new fashions, modern trends, advanced ways of doing things. In consequence, they are led to various snares and traps, as well.

The young are caught easily by unscrupulous people who want to make them addicted to drugs and intoxicating drinks. They are easily tempted to try harmful practices. Of course, youth does not last. The youth begins to grow up. Eventually, they are on the threshold of manhood. Cares begin to trouble them. Responsibilities become a burden.

Manhood brings about the need to think of social obligations. The duties that have to be performed tend to occupy their mind. Then suddenly it is the time for marriage. You start a new life. You have to look after your spouse. Your children are your primary care.

Time seems to fly on a fast wing. All this gives way to advancing middle-age. Children are now growing up. It is time you thought about their future. They, too, have to start their own lives. Middle-age gives way to maturity. Even the simplest activities are now ordeals. Breathing needs an effort. Walking is problematic. Illness and disease become constant companions. A stick helps keep one's self steady. At last youth has fled - without a trace. And at the end, old age, decay and deterioration have set in.



HĀ! VINĀSĀ MAHADDHANĀ

"ALAS! GREAT FORTUNES END WITH DESTRUCTION"

Men amass wealth with a great effort. But, in sudden disaster, either natural or man-made, their great fortunes vanish in a trice.

HĀ! VINĀSĀ MAHADDHANĀ

People accumulate wealth with a great effort, and in a trice either in a fire, flood or an earthquake, all that gets destroyed.

People amass wealth with an effort that is almost superhuman. Spending sleepless nights, without a minute's rest, sacrificing their intimate personal relations, they devote themselves with one-pointed concentration to the accumulation of wealth. They put together great fortunes, collecting them bit by bit, like puny ants building their tall and complicated nests. The stories of men and women who made it read like fairy tales. Some people begin very small. When they accumulate great wealth their lives become success stories, eliciting wide admiration.

To accumulate such wealth and that kind of great fortune, some of these people have to make great sacrifices. Some lose their human quality. They display utmost miserliness and stinginess. They have to be cruel to their fellow-men. In Buddhist Scripture, some men of that category have been referred to. There was a miserly guild-leader who did not want to eat or drink properly, fearing that his wealth may diminish.

But, in his instance, he was brought to his senses by the Teachings of the Buddha. This does not happen very much in the modern world. Some men and women in the modern world pursue money as the end all and be all of life. The wealth they acquire begins to dominate them.

In the ancient world, vast fortunes were swept away instantaneously, in one stroke. A sudden flood may inundate wealth accumulated over long years. Fires, earthquakes, land-slides reduce vast wealth into ashes or rubble in just a trice. The prosperous port city of Kobe in Japan, second only to the capital of Tokyo, was destroyed in an earthquake. Affluent men and women who lived in the lap of luxury were immediately rendered homeless and were totally bereft of the wealth they had so carefully earned.

In the fluctuations of exchange transactions, fortunes get wiped out in minutes. Millionaires are reduced to paupers. Some events of that type underline the vast futility of acquiring fabulous fortunes. Even in modern history we have disturbing instances of the utter destruction of vast wealth, in a very brief moment. On April 14th - 15th 1912, the passenger liner Titanic sank during its maiden voyage with a loss of 1513 lives. At that time, this was the largest and the most luxurious ship afloat. Those who travelled in it when its voyage ended tragically were some of the most affluent people on earth at that time. Minutes before the ship sank, those travelling in it were dining, wining, singing and dancing in extreme gaiety. Suddenly, in an unprecedented tragedy their lives were lost, in spite of their fabulous wealth and the luxury of the ship they sailed in.

How can one account for such a tragic loss of wealth? The truth of the statement, "Alas! Vast fortunes get swept away", is amply proved by this event. At times, the death of a fabulously rich person takes place under utterly unfortunate circumstances. Henry Ford, the world's pioneer in modern auto-manufacture, died helplessly in isolation in a lonely place. Vast fortunes, fabulous wealth get destroyed pathetically. What is essential is to come to terms with the reality of wealth. Alas! How ephemeral and evanescent is it?

HĀ! SAṂYOGĀ VIYOGANTĀ

"ALAS! MEETINGS END WITH SEPARATION"

Everyday, every moment, people meet and separate. But all these get-togethers end in separation yielding place to sorrow.

HĀ! SAṂYOGĀ VIYOGANTĀ

Every day, every moment, people meet and separate- some under tragic circumstances. In all instances separation brings about pangs. This is the nature of human life.

Human life is a whole series of meetings. We meet our parents and separate from them when we have to leave for education, for professional purposes, for holidays, and for meetings with other people.

Friends meet each other and separate, and each goes his or her own way. Colleagues meet and separate. Wives and husbands meet, and they have to separate for a variety of reasons.

Every moment there are meetings and separations. In the modern world, in such places as airports, train stations, bus stands, we have scenes of meetings and separations. Some of the meetings and partings are highly emotional. When people meet after a long absence, they are emotionally moved.

When you are separated from someone near or dear to you, the farewells are highly charged emotionally. Some people cry, wail, lament and weep at separation. In the modern world though travel is speedy, separation generates emotion.

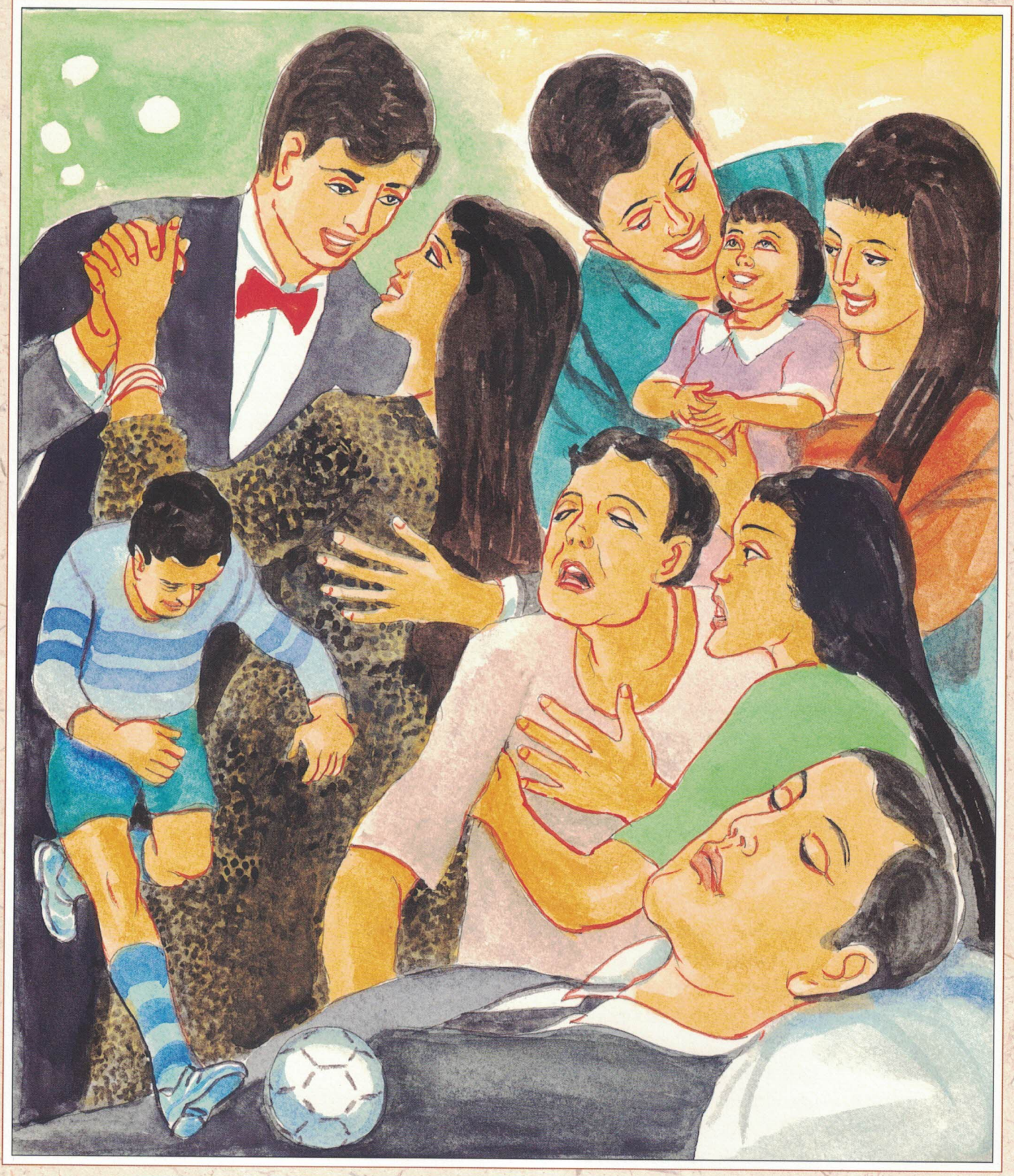
Throughout history when men left for battle, the separation has been emotion-fraught. This is true of the modern world, too. When soldiers go to war those who are left behind cannot hold back their tears at this separation. They are not sure what their fate is likely to be. In human life, people meet again and again and also, they separate again and again. This way, meeting and separating has become a pattern of life. The Buddha, in His first sermon **"Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta"** (The Turning of the Wheel of Truth) defines what suffering is. In that one of the reasons for suffering is given this way "**Piyehi Vippayogo Dukkho**" (Separation from those you like is a cause of suffering).

This process is painful. Lovers feel the pangs of separation very keenly. The pain of separation is keener when attachment is greater.

In human life, the final separation is death. Human beings have to separate from their loved ones through death. **Māra** (Death) does not care for the attachments which people have for each other. He snatches them away as he wishes, bringing about sorrowful separations.

These separations through death accumulate from birth to birth. "**Lovada Sangarāwa**" (The Book of Worldly Welfare) says, the tears shed by just one person, throughout the repeated births, at the separation through death of one's mother, exceed in quantum all the water in the seas.

This is the pain of separation from just one relative - one's mother. Imagine the separations from other relatives, friends and associates. This way, one can see the truth of the saying that all meetings end in separation which invariably leads to sorrow, if you have to part from those you keenly love.



HĀ! MATANTĀ SAJĪVAKĀ

"ALAS! THE LIVING ENDS WITH DEATH"

No being can ever escape death-the inescapable end to all life. All living beings-human or non-human -are subject to death. This is a universal principle.

HĀ! MATANTĀ SAJĪVAKĀ

Most of the things used by the Egyptian pharaohs when they were alive were entombed with them in their pyramids. But, they were not able to conquer death. Some believed in the possibility of rising from the dead, beating death. Whatever may be the belief, in reality, what actually happens is life ending in death.

In human life, the greatest sorrow is generated through the death of those who are near and dear to you. Although death has been present from the beginning of life, it has not at all been possible for anyone to put an end to death. However long a person may live, one will invariably die at the end of his allotted span.

If there is any living entity, death will inevitably end its process. From the time man became conscious of his destiny, he has tried to put an end to death. Various religions and various cultures have tried a variety of ways in which they could try to cope with death. Some primitive cultures have tried to achieve immortality by preserving dead bodies. Ancient Egyptian culture is an outstanding case in point.

The ancient Egyptians evolved a system of mummifying dead bodies. This way, they thought, they could conquer death. When Egyptian pharaohs died, their mummified bodies were kept in monumental pyramids. Because they believed in the continuity of life they made all the necessary arrangements for those pharaohs to lead a full life in the next world, too.

The most famous story in Buddhist literature about the reluctance to accept death is connected with Kisa Gotami. She, as a young mother, could not accept the reality of her infant son's death. She wandered around carrying the dead infant seeking medicine for the infant. She was directed to the Buddha by the people who did not know how Kisa Gotami could be taught the lesson of the universality of death. The Buddha, in His supreme wisdom, devised a method. He asked Kisa Gotami to bring a pinch of mustard seeds from a house where death had not occurred. After talking to few households, Kisa Gotami realized the universality of death.

In Buddhist literature Death is personified as **Māra**. He is visualized as a person who snatches away people whenever it suits him. Death is no respecter of persons. Death does not care for the age level of people.

Nor does death stop to question whether a particular person has completed his or her tasks. Anything that is living is fair game for Death. Even though a human being may live for a century, Death will strike him at the end. This way, Death is a by-product of life. When life begins, Death comes along with it. Therefore, it is a universally applicable theory that all living beings and all living things end in death.

The Buddha's Teachings are directed towards the attainment of the deathless, because all beings yearn to put an end to death. The final curtain of all living things, is inexorable death. Death is the ultimate penalty that has to be paid for living.

In the Buddhist system, a variety of meditations is taught to enable people to come to terms with the reality of death. **Kāyagatāsati** (Contemplation of the Nature of Life) **Maranānussati** (Contemplation of the Nature of Death) are two among them.

HĀ! UNNATĀ ONATANTĀ

"ALAS! RISE ENDS WITH FALL"

People, institutions and organizations, at times, come into prominence, with meteoric speed. They last only for a moment and disintegrate.

HĀ! UNNATĀ ONATANTĀ

History is replete with men who rose to power almost overnight. Hitler is an instance. He rose to power and had the ambition of conquering the whole world. But he fell disastrously. At the end he had to take his own life.

This statement indicates fortunes and their fluctuations. In certain situations under certain circumstances, individuals rise to power and when these circumstances are gone, they fall.

This truth is best illustrated by the fortunes of some men who dominated various eras and places. In recent history, we have seen one of the most astounding of historical personalities in Hitler of Germany. He rose to power in a meteoric glow. His dream was the conquest of the whole world. He wanted to write the history of the world in his own terms. He built one of the most destructive armies the world has ever known.

He slaughtered men and women in millions. He inflicted torture on innocents. He strode the world as if it were his private court-yard. He reduced cities to rubble. He instilled fear into millions. Such a rise has only very rarely been seen in human history. But with all that power what was his final fate? He had to die by his own hand, despised by mankind.

An identical destiny overtook dictator Mussolini of Italy. He massacred people with not even the least regard for human life. At the end, he was killed in the most ignominous manner.

His dead body was hanged upside down by the road-side. He rose to power in a grand show of glory. But, he ended in depressing ignominy. This fate overtakes outstanding political leaders who at one stage are the heroes of the mob, but at another, are driven out of power. History of such rises and falls is, at times, quite intriguing. Lenin was the hero of the communist world. He was adored and deified. But, under another regime even his statues were toppled.

This truth, therefore, is universal. Sometimes even gods fall. Even they are subject to this rule of rise and fall. It happens not only to individuals. This is likely to happen to institutions, countries and empires. Countries like the USSR that wielded considerable power, deteriorated, threatened by opposing forces. The British Empire, described at one time as the empire where the sun does not set, has now disintegrated.

When you consider the fate of persons and institutions that rise into power and fall, we can appreciate the universal truth of the statement, **"Hā! Unnatā onatantā."** In the field of games and sports, too, this axiom is valid. A champion of one day may get beaten the next. A Tyson may suddenly fall into disrepute within a few seconds. It is only the Truth that has no rises and falls. It is the same everyday - for all time.

An ironic instance of this kind of rise and fall is provided by Emperor Alexander the Great. He built one of the earliest Empires in human history. It extended from Macedonia to India. After such a stupendous rise, he was brought down by a tiny Malaria mosquito.

HĀ! PIYĀSOKA ANTAKĀ

"ALAS! PLEASURE ENDS WITH SORROW"

In the human condition, no pleasure lasts for ever.
Sorrow, grief and lamentation follow many forms of pleasure.

HĀ! PIYĀ SOKA ANTAKĀ

Pleasure, when it is practised without a sense of discretion, brings about sorrow. Many individuals seek pleasure through such activities as taking intoxicating drinks, gambling and indulging in other forms of sensualities. Many of them end their lives in sorrow.

Young people assembled in a discotheque for a happy get-together. They were dancing away the hours. Songs dominated the air. The young people were at the height of their power. Suddenly, a fire broke out. In a brief moment the whole place was gutted. Dancers, singers, merry-makers - all pleasure seekers ended up dead. This pleasure yielded place to horrendous death. Pleasure is ephemeral - its sway is short-lived in most instances.

The search for pleasure is very often compared, in Buddhist literature, to a thirsty deer running towards a mirage mistaking it for water. Once it gets exhausted it may realize its folly.

In another context the brief span of pleasure is explained as the glee of a crab in a cooking pot. The water is initially cold. The crab sports in the water while it is cold. Little by little, the water begins to get hotter and hotter as a fire is lit under it. The crab's pleasure and its water-sports end with that heat. The aftermath of pleasure is mostly agony and depression. At the end of pleasure in most human situations, there is sorrow. People are not happy with the pleasure they experience. They, therefore, feel a compelling need to repeat the pleasure. Still, pleasure eludes them.

While people are in the middle of their pleasure they feel a sense of diversion. But when that spell of pleasure ends, they feel a sense of dissatisfaction. Lasting pleasure is an impossibility for human beings. The fleeting sense of satisfaction people derive from pleasure is compared, at times, to the cooling effect of the wind a condemned victim feels when he is thrown down off a peak, to his death. In a trice, his body will be shattered to bits on the rock below. Meantime, as he is hurled down, a cooling wind comforts his body.

The only lasting pleasure is the tranquillity of mind experienced by the meditator. Those who are bent on worldly pleasure, resort to various activities. Some tend to drink. Some people seek pleasure in gambling. There are others who pursue sensual pleasures. In most instances, these inordinate pursuits of pleasure bring about sorrow. Almost everyday we hear of drunken drivers coming to tragic ends, driving after drinking too much.

Pleasure cannot be sustained over a long period of time. Therefore, most people have to repeat their experiences over and over, to keep on deriving pleasure. When they repeat pleasureable actions, their lives very often deteriorate. One can quote the instance of a person who has got addicted to intoxicating drinks, as a source of pleasure.

He will repeat this action over and over, to get pleasure. In consequence, his health will continue to deteriorate, leading to death. To avoid the sorrow that is likely to come after indulgence in pleasure, one must obtain the necessary spiritual discipline.

HĀ! THOMANĀ VININDANTĀ

"ALAS! PRAISE ENDS WITH DISGRACE"

The moment of high praise is quite likely to be followed by denigration and disgrace. Out of those who are praised there is hardly anyone who does not face disgrace.

HĀ! THOMANĀ VININDANTĀ

The truth of this statement is proved correct, almost everyday, in the field of politics. A given person may get chance for high political office today. But, tomorrow he may get a dismissed in disgrace.

Praise comes as a result of the approval of masses. The public approve a person and praise him, single out some special quality to acclaim him. This kind of praise is ephemeral. It is just because the quality which the masses have seen in him may diminish. This happens to men and women in limelight.

A film-star may enjoy popular adulation. That star may be considered the 'heart-throb' of the fans. Mobs thronged to see the 'star', wherever the 'star' went. But, if some defect in the person's character is revealed, all this praise turns sour. Instead of the bouquets of a previous day, the 'star' is quite likely to get brick-bats.

Besides, most people find it difficult to praise. Finding fault is easier. For this reason, too, we find that after brief spells of praise, insults are heaped on persons.

In South Korea, presidents received the highest praise and adoration. Later on, when some discoveries were made about their unethical behaviour, they were insulted both at popular level and at official level. The outcome of all this was that the ex-presidents were imprisoned.

Praise and blame are part of the human condition. In the eight-fold worldly conditions, praise and blame occur, as situations which people have to face begin to fluctuate. When people deserve praise, they have to be given that deserving praise. Such popular praise is likely to give them a sense of responsibility.

Those who are widely praised are careful about protecting their image. They will be slow to stoop to unworthy behaviour. Therefore, praise can act as a valuable corrective.

To insult people is quite a cruel act. But, people may resort to it due to a feeling of betrayal. People, when they feel betrayed by those who have been trusted by the masses, get exasperated. Their exasperation gets expressed through insults. There is hardly a person who does not get insulted.

The Buddha, who is perhaps the most honoured being in the history of mankind, was insulted on several occasions. Brahmins insulted Him as "shaven-head". He was the victim of certain initiatives to sully his personality.

The well-known story of **Cintā** who came to His presence as a pregnant woman with the sole purpose of insulting the Buddha, is an important instance. For those people who are true to their conscience and do not resort to any measures that are likely to be crooked, to be the butt of insults is a bit hard. However, disciplined persons must train themselves to accept both praise and blame, with an unperturbed mind.

HĀ! DUKKHĀ SABBASO SUKHĀ

"ALAS! HAPPINESS ENDS WITH SORROW"

We tend to consider many activities as being conducive to happiness.
All forms of happiness are short-lived and end in feelings of dissatisfaction.

HĀ! DUKKHĀ SABBASO SUKHĀ

Happiness ending in sorrow, is evident everywhere in the world - almost everyday.
Happy air-travel, ends in some instances, in harrowing tragedy,
making survivors feel shock and sorrow.
The tragedy of the luxury -liner "Titanic" is the most harrowing example in
modern times of happiness ending in sorrow.

The sense of happiness experienced by people can come about due to a variety of reasons. To some a good dinner is the cause of happiness. Love and affection they receive from the people they like will make some people happy. Victory at examinations, at battles, or at competitions gives happiness to some people.

But, all these forms of happiness are short-lived, and at the end of that kind of happiness suffering is quite likely to come. Take, for instance, the individual who takes a good dinner. At the end of it he is likely to find that the food does not agree with him.

At times, the sorrow at the end of happiness can come from an unexpected source. Some people take intoxicating drinks, mistaking that kind of thing to be a source of happiness. But, it could very well be that the intoxicating drink they took was contaminated. This way, the drink, instead of making the drinker happy, is quite likely to threaten his life.

In the Buddhist sense, all forms of worldly happiness end in sorrow. This is because there is no true happiness in worldly pursuits. Sensual pleasure is considered to give happiness to people. But, that kind of happiness is short-lived. Sensual pleasures have been described as the act of enjoying poisoned mangoes. The person who does not know that the mango is poisoned may savor it, while eating it. But soon, it begins to work on him. And happiness turns into sorrow. According to Buddhist thought, happiness arising from worldly pursuits is likely to yield only sorrow. The primary reason for this is that the basic human condition cannot be altered. Whatever we do, we cannot avoid the consequences of birth. All those who are born are subject to '**jarā**' (decay - old age) and '**maraṇa**' (death). Any happiness that beings enjoy when dominated by these characteristics is fraught with sorrow.

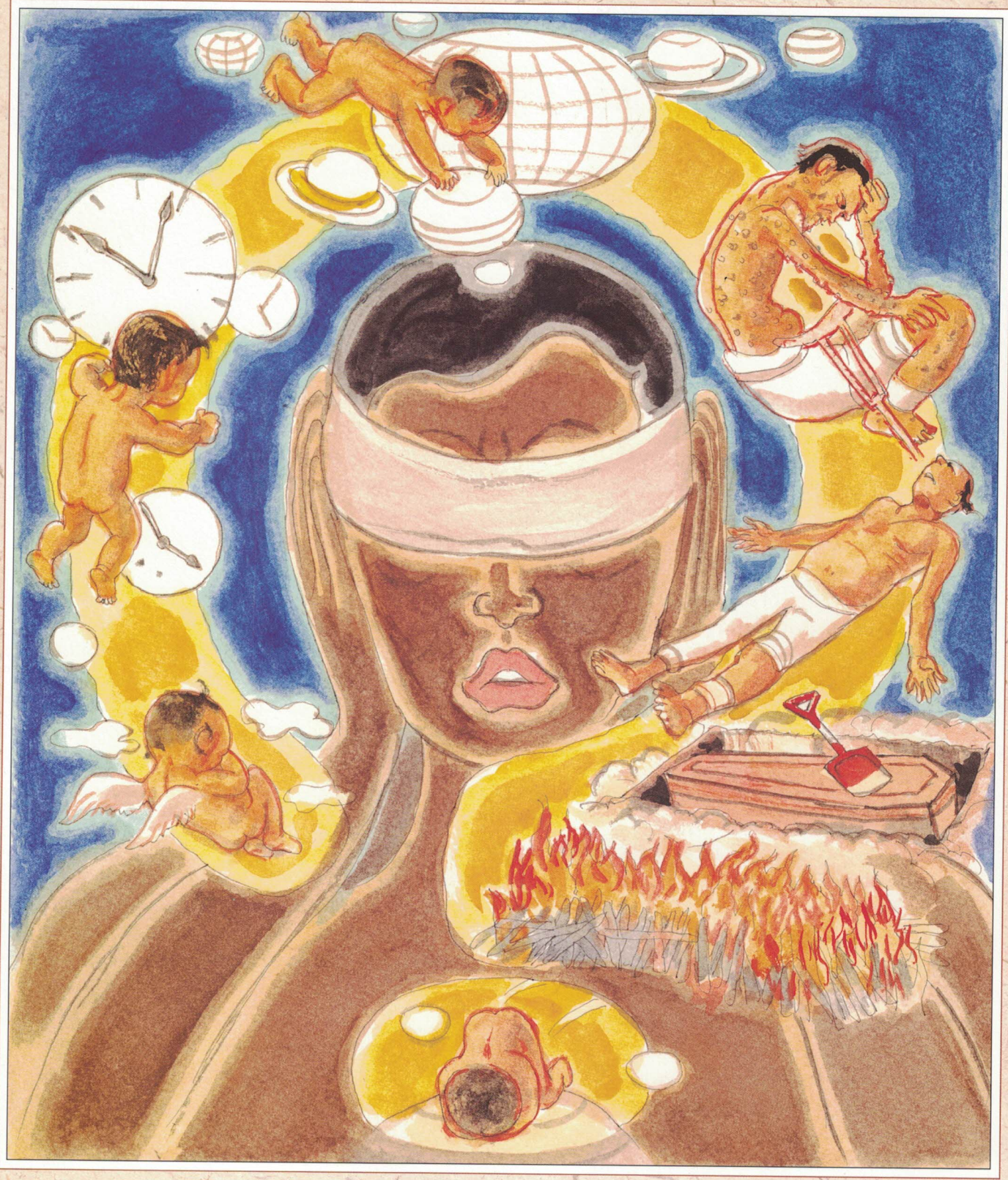
The only lasting happiness that does not bring sorrow in its wake is the joy that one receives from the realization of truth. The sorrow that follows happiness has been emphasized by a wide variety of images in literature - especially religious literature.

In a very popular expression of that kind of situation, the image of a man up in a fruit tree, is given in a didactic work. The man atop the fruit tree keeps on eating the delicious fruit, oblivious of everything else. He is happily absorbed in his enjoyment of the fruit. But, suddenly the tree is cut down and he comes down in a crash: thus the happiness ends in sorrow.

The Buddha very clearly pointed out the true nature of the happiness that comes with victory:

Jayaṃ veraṃ pasavati
Dukkhaṃ seti parājito
Upasanto sukhaṃ seti
Hitvā jaya parājayaṃ

Victory breeds hatred. Those who are defeated live in pain. Those who are peaceful live happily, giving up both victory and defeat.



Jīvitaṃ vyādhi kāloca - Deha nikkhepamaṃ gati
Pañce te jīvalokasmiṃ - Animittā na nāyare

How one's life will be led; what kind of disease one would suffer; when will one die; how will one's body be disposed of and where will one be reborn-these are the five uncertainties in human life.

JĪVITAṂ VYĀDHI KĀLOCA

In human life, five major issues are shrouded in uncertainty.

Jīvitaṃ vyādhi kāloca
Deha nikkhepamaṃ gati
Pañce te jīvalokasmiṃ
Animittā na nāyare

jīvitaṃ - how one would lead one's life
vyādhi - the kind of disease one would suffer
kāloca - the time of one's death
deha nikkhepamaṃ - the manner in which one's body is disposed of
gati - where will one be reborn
jīva lokasmiṃ - in the world of human beings
pañce te - these five things
animittā - are not certain (cannot be predicted)
na nāyare - cannot be known ahead

In brief, this is what the Buddha says in that stanza: There are five points about human life, that cannot be known or indicated with certainty. These five are: how one's life will be led; what diseases a person will be subjected to; the time of a person's death; how one's mortal remains will be disposed of; and when and how he will be reborn. When we look at these in detail, we begin to see the greatness of the Buddha's eternal wisdom.

He says, in the first instance, that no one can be certain how one's life will be led. Will the person be a doctor, a lawyer, a writer, or will he be rich, famous? Again, who could say that he will not be poor or would become a thief or a murderer? He could even be a person with fluctuating fortunes. He may become affluent and get reduced to the level of a pauper - or else, he may evolve from rags to riches.

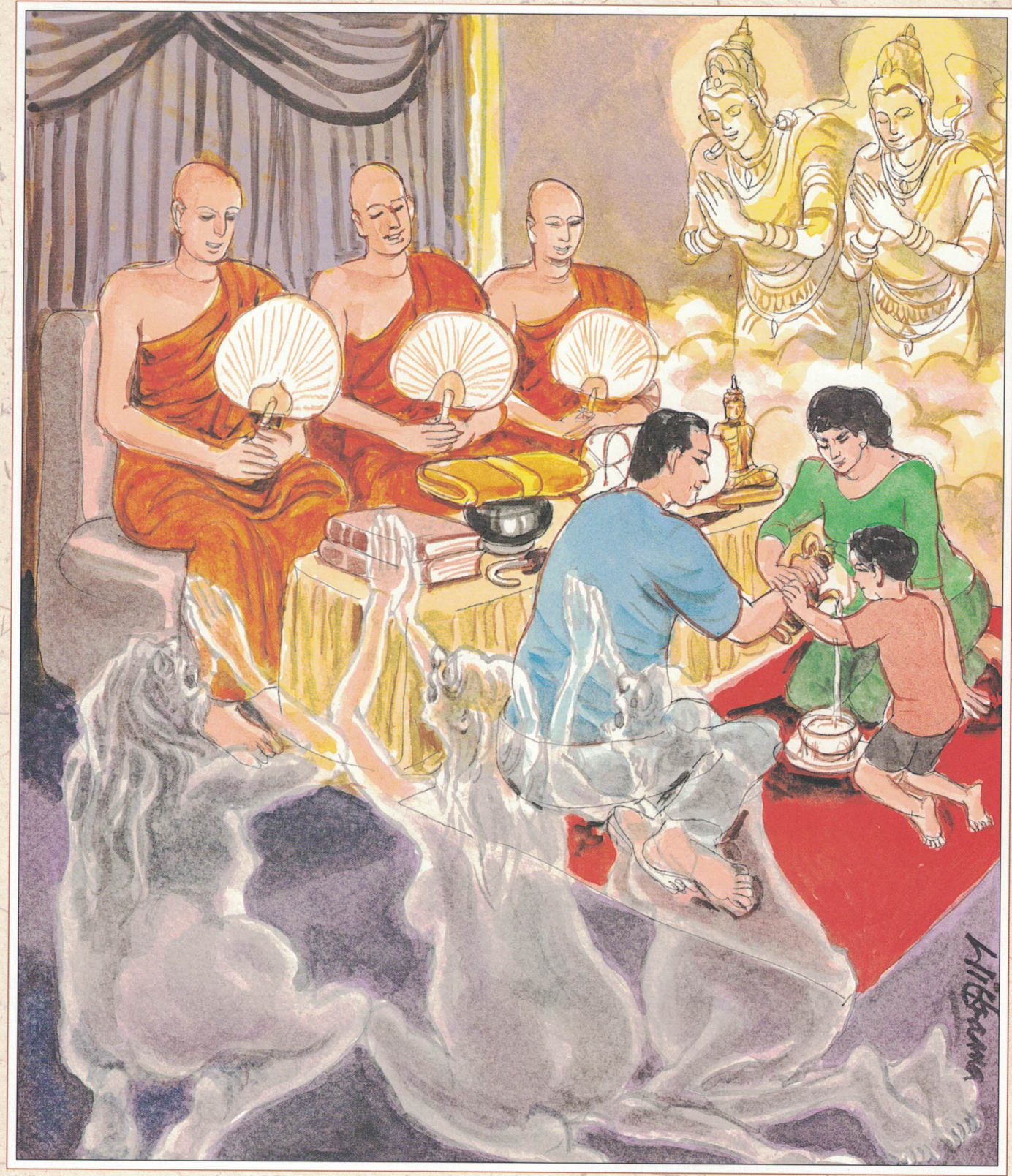
Secondly, who would know what diseases a person would suffer? He could be afflicted with fever, skin-diseases, TB or asthma. He may even have cancer. He may even have cardiac arrest or he may fall victim to Aids. In the instance of diseases too, one cannot be certain about what one's fate is going to be.

The third uncertainty is time of one's death. How can one say at what time a person will die - A person may die young, some may die even before birth or immediately at birth. There are those who die in ripe old age. This way, one cannot be certain about the age at which one may die. One cannot even know at what time, one's death will take place. It could be now or months or decades later. It could be during day-time or at night. Who could know?

Then there is the disposal of the mortal remains of a person. One's body may be disposed of in the sea.It could even be broken up into tiny bits and pieces that no methodical disposal is possible. Some die in old age and their bodies can be disposed of methodically in terms of the proper rites and rituals.

A person may be born in a given country. But no one can say where he will die. A man may be born in the tropics. He may die in Africa, America or Australia. No one knows where one will die. Thus, in the matter of the disposal of human bodies too, one cannot be certain.

In the last instance, no one knows how and where one will be reborn. This too, is an uncertainty about life.One cannot predict if a person will be reborn in heaven, in a woeful state, or human form or in the animal world.



Idaṃ me ñātinaṃ hotū
Sukhitā hontu ñātayo

May this merit get transferred to the departed,
and may those relatives be happy.

TRANSFERENCE OF MERIT TO THE DEPARTED

Those who departed, depend mostly on the merit transferred to them by living relatives. Transferring merit makes some of these departed persons get fulfilled. Transferring merits helps the living too, as they too will have to gather merits, in order to transfer them.

Idaṃ me ñātinaṃ hotū
Sukhitā hontu ñātayo

idaṃ - this merit
me - to my
ñātinaṃ - relatives
hotū - may accrue
sukhitā - in happiness
hontu - may (you) be
ñātayo - relatives

An essential element in most of the rituals associated with the practice of Buddhism, is the transference of merit to the Departed. Those who have passed away, are remembered in most of the religious rites connected with practical Buddhism.

This practice of transferring merits to the departed, started during the Buddha's day. Some of these departed persons are reborn in states in which they cannot acquire merit through their own exertion. They do not engage in commercial transactions. They depend entirely on what has been transferred to them by their living relatives.

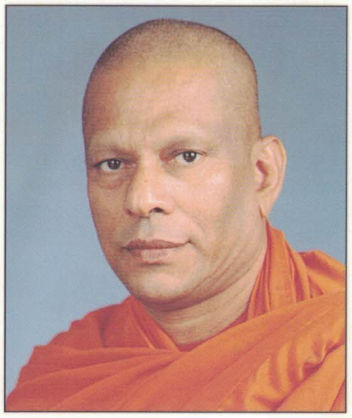
There are several categories of these beings who have been reborn in pitiable circumstances. One of these categories is described as **paradattūpajīvino** - those who depend on the merits transferred to them. In the discourse titled "**Tirokudda**", it is said that some of these departed spirits come back to their previous homes. The living cannot see them. But, they can see the living.

It is the duty of the living to make various offerings to the Buddha and the monks, and to transfer the merits accruing through such offerings, to the departed. Those who transfer merit should specifically wish that the departed spirits acquire it and will be happy. Those departed spirits will, in turn, bless those who transfer merit to them. They will wish their living well-wishers long life, also prosperity and good health.

The transferred merit will automatically go to the spirits who yearn for such merit. This process is likened to the pouring of water. When water is poured, it invariably flows downwards - down-hill. Similarly, when merit is transferred, it invariably reaches those who expect it.

The need to transfer merit to the departed is emphasized by a story relating to King Bimbisara. On one occasion, he held an Alms-Giving at his palace for the Buddha and the monks. At the end of it, he donated Veluvana Monastery to the Buddha. That night, King Bimbisara dreamt a whole horde of his departed relatives lamenting. The Buddha had the King make alms-offerings to the Buddha and the monks, and to transfer that merit to those spirits. Next, the King dreamt that those hordes had become happy, since the merit transferred to them made it possible for them to get food and clothing.

The ritual of transferring merit to the departed is extensively practised in many countries. Transferring merit brings about wholesome results to the persons who transfer merit, too. According to Buddhist thinking, those who transfer merit should perform that rite with a pure, unsullied, generous mind. Good results will accrue to them only then .



Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero presents in this profoundly significant book entitled **"The Nature of Life and Death"** the deeply disturbing question before the whole of mankind - "What do life and death mean?" With this work the publications to his credit go beyond the figure of 170. Late in 1997 Ven. W. Sarada Maha Thero established a Buddhist publication record by launching his work "**The Highest Blessing**" (English translation of **Mahāmangala Sutta**) at Jetavana Monastery, **Sāvatthi**, where the Buddha first preached this Sermon over 2,500 years ago.

The Venerable author of this publication is now recognized world-wide as a Buddhist monk who has contributed a series of outstanding books to world literature on issues relating to Buddhism and to problems linked to human ethics. Millions of his books have been distributed world-wide, free. His unerring recognition of the reading habits of the moderns has resulted in the production of high quality works lavishly illustrated with colour art. .

Born in Sri Lanka in 1941, he was ordained a Buddhist monk in 1953, when he was just 12. He pursued his higher education at Sri Jayawardhanepura University, Sri Lanka, and obtained his First Degree in 1964. He functioned as Principal, Indurupathvila University College, Sri Lanka, from 1965 - 1967, and from 1967 - 1969, he was Principal, Sudharma University College. He dedicated himself fully and with missionary zeal to the spreading of the Word of the Buddha abroad, beginning his service in this field in Penang, Malaysia. There, he was Principal, Mahindarama Sunday Pali School until 1979. In that year, he came over to Singapore and founded The Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre (SBMC). The Venerable author, currently the Chief Monk at SBMC, pioneered in the founding of the American-Sri Lanka Buddhist Association of which he is still the Director. In addition, he is the current General Secretary of Japan-Sri Lanka Buddhist Centre of which he was the Founder-President. He is the Chief Incumbent Monk of Jayanthi Vihara, Weragoda, Sri Lanka.

His unique publications programme is distinguished for a whole body of works which have established a series of records. His monumental work **"Treasury of Truth - Illustrated Dhammapada"** is unparalleled for the thousands of responses it evoked just in one day. His works appear in Sinhala, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and in English. His *magnum-opus* to-date, **"Treasury of Truth - Illustrated Dhammapada"** was recently brought out in a Chinese version. The immediate predecessor to the present publication is "**The Greatest Man Who Lived - The Supreme Buddha**." Its Sinhala version too has been published. His **"Illustrated Jataka Tales"**, work on which is in progress, will have especially commissioned illustrations to adorn its text. Blessed with a fertile imagination the Venerable author has already lined up an impressive array of publishing projects to spread the Word of the Buddha for the good of the many, for the well-being of the many.

By Edwin Ariyadasa

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